

OFFICE OF VIOLENCE PREVENTION

Annual Report to the Governor and Legislature

July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024

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Nebraska Crime Commission

October 2024

NEBRASKA

Good Life. Great Service.

**COMMISSION ON LAW ENFORCEMENT
AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

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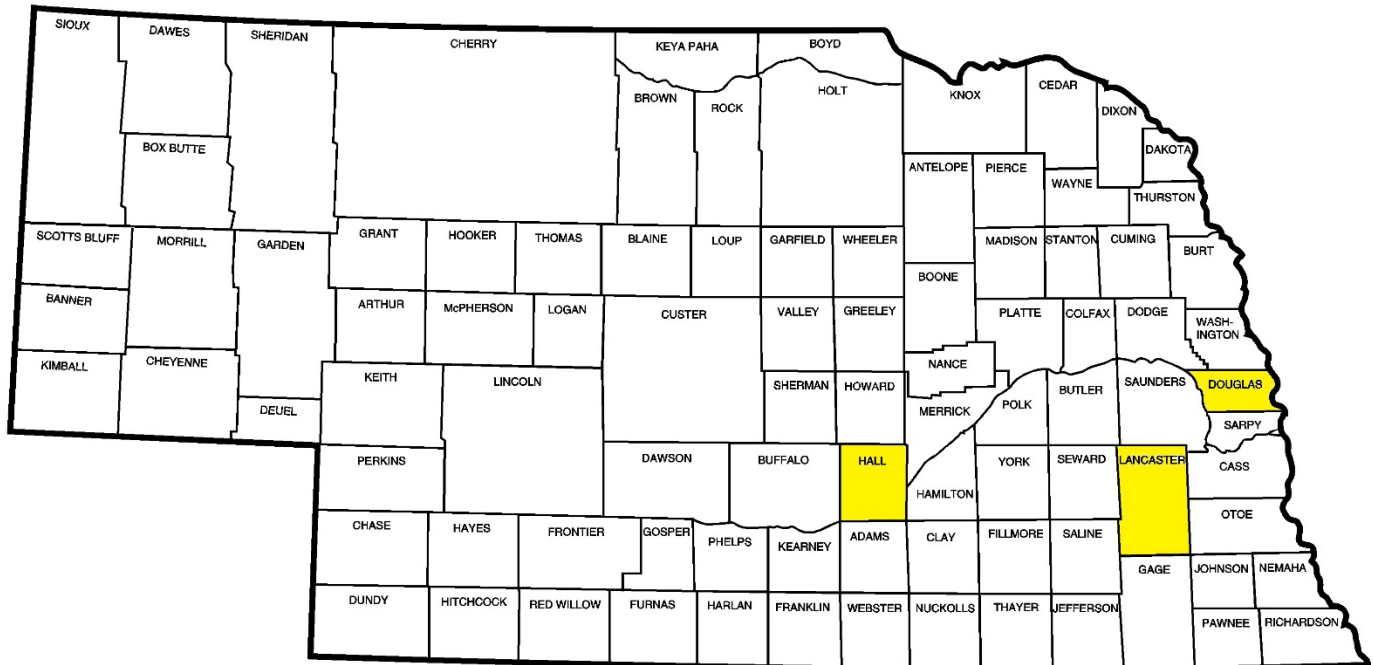
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Executive Summary

In fiscal year 2024, Office of Violence Prevention (CBA) funded 12 programs through 3 counties, awarding 13 grants for \$591,000.00 in total. The map below (figure 1) depicts counties with OVP funded programs during FY2024. There were no tribes seeking OVP grant funds in FY2024.

Office of Violence Prevention has seen a dramatic increase in applications for OVP funding. In FY 2024, 17 applications were received with \$2,216,183 in requests. For the upcoming FY 2025, 19 applications were received with \$1,854,233 in requests.

Figure 1. OVP Grant Recipients FY 2023-2024



In April 2024, Chris Carlile assumed the responsibility of the role of the Director of the Office of Violence Prevention by the appointment from the Crime Commission Executive Director, Bryan Tuma.

Introduction

The primary responsibility of the Office of Violence Prevention is to help develop, foster, promote, and assess statewide violence prevention programs in the State of Nebraska.

History

In 2009, the Nebraska Legislature passed LB63 (N.R.S. §81-1447 through 1451, creating the Office of Violence Prevention (OVP). The Legislature found that to effectively address these issues, communities must develop a multi-faceted approach that includes violence prevention activities, intervention, enforcement and rehabilitation. In March 2015, the Nebraska Legislature passed LB 167 which also included the creation of youth employment opportunities in high-crime areas as an additional priority focus.

Office of Violence Prevention Grant Program

Office of Violence Prevention Grant is a competitive grant apportioned in aid in accordance with statute (N.R.S. § 81-1450) that appear to have the greatest benefit to the state, and which have as goals, the reduction of street and gang violence, the reduction of homicides and injuries caused by firearms, and the creation of youth employment opportunities in high-crime areas.

Funds Awarded

For project period July 1, 2023 - June 30, 2024 (FY2024), a total of \$591,000.00 of Office of Violence Prevention funding was awarded to 13 grantees, which encompassed 3 counties. On April 26, 2023, the former Director of the Office of Violence and the Advisory Council voted to rescind the award for 1 grantee, a total of \$42,906.00 that was re-awarded in FY2025.

Types of Violence Prevention Programs Funded

There are three statutory categories to which a funded program or service classifies as:

- I. **Reduction in Street or Gang Violence:** Entities in this category are often programs; they generally meet with a youth multiple times over a specific period of time. Generally, the program relies on an educational or relationship-based component to invoke behavioral change within the client.
- II. **Reduction of Homicides and Injuries caused by Firearms:** Entities in this category are often agencies; they generally meet with a youth a few times to conduct a singular service. This could be to conduct an assessment or to help coordinate services. Very few entities in this category do not work with youth directly but support the initiatives that do the direct work.
- III. **Youth Employment in High-Crime Areas:** Entities in this category are often programs; they generally meet with a youth multiple times over a specific period of time. Generally, the program relies on an education or relationship-based component to invoke behavioral change within the client.

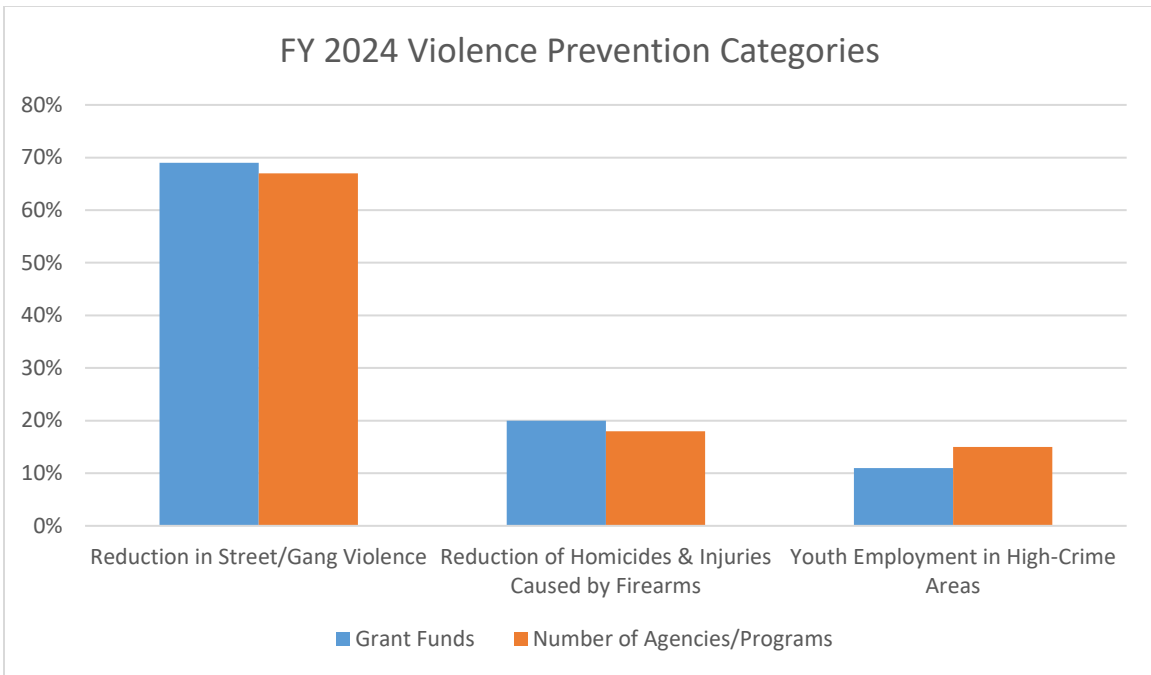


Chart 1 illustrates the breakdown of funded programs and the amount of funds for each statutory category in FY 2024.

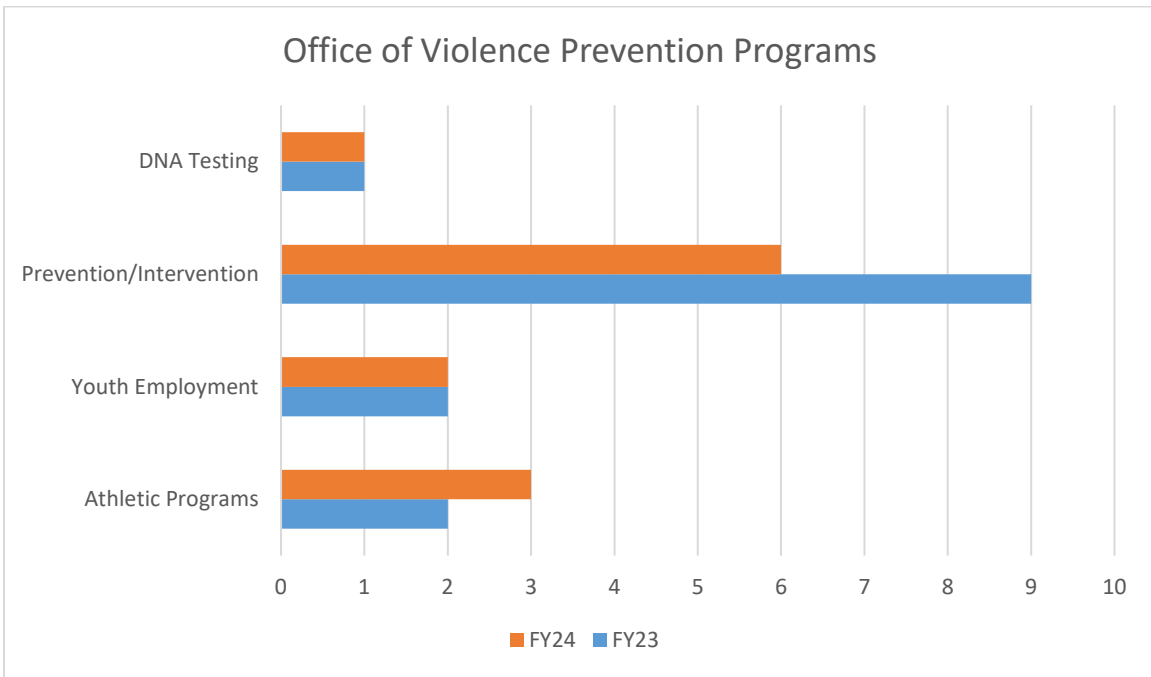


Chart 2 further breakdown the types of programs funded between FY 2023 and FY 2024

Program Evaluation

Pursuant to NRS §81-1450 and Title 73, Chapter 1, Section 012 , a portion of grant funds may be set aside for an external third-party evaluation of the effectiveness of the Office of Violence Prevention Program. The program evaluations are submitted to the Director of Office of Violence Prevention no later than 45 days after the grant has ended. The Director and the Advisory Board will review the evaluations for the effectiveness and outcomes of the programs receiving funds through the Office of Violence Prevention Grant Program.

Evaluation of program effectiveness and future system involvement is conducted at least once every 4 years following the Office of Violence Prevention award to the organization.

The Office of Violence Prevention Advisory Council

Pursuant to NRS §81-1447, the Advisory Council to the Office of Violence Prevention was established and shall consist of six members of each congressional district with at least one member of each congressional district on the council. The Governor appoints the members of the council representing the following areas, if practicable: Two members representing local government, two members representing law enforcement, one member representing community advocacy and one member representing education with some expertise in law enforcement and juvenile crime.

Each member shall serve a four year term and may be reappointed at the expiration of their term. The Advisory Council shall meet at least quarterly. Among the Advisory Council's responsibilities, the council is directed to recommend to the Crime Commission, the rules and regulations regarding program fundraising, program evaluation, coordination of programs, and the criteria used to assess and award funds to violence prevention programs.

The additional duties of the Advisory Council shall include, but not limited to, receiving applications for violence prevention funds, evaluating such applications, and making recommendations to the Crime Commission regarding the merits of each application with the recommended amount of any funds that should be awarded. The Advisory Council shall continuously monitor how such funds are being used by the program, conduct periodic evaluations of programs, assess the progress and success regarding the Office of Violence Prevention goals of each program's awarded funds. The Advisory Council shall recommend to the Crime Commission any modification, continuation, or discontinuation of funding.

The **Advisory Council** consists of the following members:

Brenda Beadle representing local government

Karen Bredthauer representing local government

Tyler Cooper representing law enforcement

Eric Sellers representing law enforcement

Scott Sasse representing education with some expertise in law enforcement and juvenile crime

Vacancy representing community advocacy

FY 2024 Office of Violence Prevention Awards

Chicano Awareness Center dba Latino Center of the Midlands	Healing Circulos: Leadership development for young women in South Omaha	Omaha	\$47,950
City of Lincoln	Operation Tipping Point	Lincoln	\$66,948
City Of Omaha	OPD Firearms DNA Testing	Omaha	\$20,000
Completely KIDS, Inc.	Teen Employment Program	Omaha	\$44,033
Douglas County Sheriff's Office	DSCO Deputy Problem-Solving Court Liaison	Omaha	\$88,151
African American Empowerment Network	AAEN Omaha 260 VIP and Step-up Omaha	Omaha	\$31,680
Girls Inc. of Omaha	Success Prep	Omaha	\$27,000
Greater Omaha Attendance and Learning Services	Family Advocate Program	Omaha	\$27,907
Hall County	Hall County JDAI	Grand Island	\$96,833
Hope Center for Kids, Inc.	Village Basketball Alliance	Omaha	\$32,654
Metropolitan Community College	Youth Forward Program	Omaha	\$32,469
NorthStar Foundation	NorthStar Foundation	Omaha	\$32,469
Police Athletics for Community Engagement	PACE Youth Program	Omaha	\$42,906 <i>(rescinded)</i>

Chicano Awareness Center dba Latino Center of the Midlands

Healing Círculos focuses on primary prevention by providing voluntary services. The program engages students with attendance problems before system involvement. That said, adjudicated youth are also eligible if referred for attendance or other school problems. The program relies on partnering schools to help in the early identification of risk factors, primarily chronic truancy, poor academic performance, and behavior problems in school. Because educators are positioned to know their students well and to collect data related to these risk factors, they are ideal partners in helping the Latino Center intervene early, well before adjudication becomes necessary. Students are referred to Healing Círculos by school administrators, counselors, Latino Center Student Advocates, juvenile justice system professionals, and community-based partner agencies. We also have self-referrals from students and their parents or guardians. Referrals are based on risk factors such as chronic truancy, lack of pro-social involvement, absence of parental involvement, lack of self-regulation, and disengagement in school and the community. Students meet on a weekly basis during the school year in a facilitated group setting to build a positive value system and address issues regarding risky behaviors. Groups are divided by gender with the young women participating in Xochikalli and young men participating in Ollin. A grant from the Office of Violence Prevention would specifically fund a Xochikalli Facilitator, who would serve at least 64 young women and girls during the one-year grant. This position is currently unfilled; the OVP grant would help the program significantly increase the number of girls and young women it serves, helping to address a need for culturally fluent, gender-specific services. Typical group sizes are 10 to 15 youth, with the ideal being 12. In addition to the weekly group sessions, students meet monthly for outings and service-learning opportunities, where they learn more about their community's needs and build group cohesion through pro-social activities. These service learning and other group outings continue in the summer when school is not in session.

City of Lincoln

Operation Tipping Point (OTP) focuses on working directly with youth, ages 11-17, who are at risk of gang affiliation within Lancaster County. Operation Tipping Point has more than 20 community partners (including a direct partnership with 17 Lincoln Public Schools) and justice stakeholders. OTP addresses the increasingly violent crimes associated with gangs through intervention/prevention strategies. A full-time Gang Outreach Specialist serves as a link between primary and secondary prevention/intervention efforts and the engagement of community partners. The Gang Outreach Specialist is located within the Lincoln Police Department Gang Unit.

City of Omaha

Gang and gun-related violent crime is a persistent problem in the Omaha metro area that devastates the lives of victims, their families, and the community at large. While there have been incredible strides made in decreasing gang and gun-related violent crime in recent years, especially in comparison with recent national trends, much more needs to be accomplished. DNA evidence from seized and recovered firearms is a critical tool to identify and apprehend suspects, provide conclusive evidence for linking suspects to criminal weapons offenses, bolster the odds of conviction, and increase the likelihood that swift and severe sanctions will be levied against the perpetrators of gun violence. These efforts help OPD to remove violent repeat offenders from the community and decrease gang and gun-related crime over time.

Completely KIDS, Inc.

Completely KIDS' Teen Employment Program (TEP) provides workforce development, professionalism training, goal setting and attainment, and employment opportunities for high school students in central Omaha. TEP provides participating young people with a healthy afterschool environment and equips them with workforce development skills and on-the-job training to improve their chances of successful education and long-term employment. For youth engaged in the program, TEP reduces the potential for them to succumb to peer pressure and be involved in unhealthy behaviors and street violence.

TEP will engage 25 students with ongoing mentoring and training in professional skills, and developing their leadership, planning, confidence, and other areas for success in the workforce and their future careers.

Participating teens, in turn, work as Completely KIDS staff to provide vital afterschool enrichment activities to younger children at schools and community sites. TEP students work directly with Completely KIDS' senior staff to receive guidance and on-the-job training. Students attend educational workshops in areas such as resume-building and conflict management. Lastly, mentor meetings serve to guide teens towards goal attainment in academics, career, and social-emotional skills-building.

Douglas County Sheriff's Office

The Douglas County Sheriff's Office (DCSO) continues to incorporate community-based policing in its operation. The Problem-Solving Deputy Liaison is a sheriff deputy from the Douglas County Sheriff's Office who works closely with the youth that bridges the gap between the courts and the youth. The DCSO includes a more robust community mental health focus through the funding of a co-responder clinician, a dedicated behavioral health/wellness unit led by a credentialed behavioral health sergeant, increased deputies operating out of local schools, and proposed evening investigation and surveillance initiatives. Additionally, deputies are staffing the county's new Juvenile Justice Center. The DCSO Deputy Problem-Solving Court Liaison will work with the above staff and resources and act as an information pipeline between the courts and law enforcement. As a result, each

entity has access to knowledge the other may not. In addition, repeated data indicates a law enforcement presence as part of a problem-solving team decreases criminal recidivism. Youth in the problem-solving court system may be involved or close to involvement with gang membership. At the Young Adult Court level, the minor may exhibit the first signs of risk factors that make them more likely to join gangs. These behaviors may include delinquency, aggression, violence, alcohol and drug use, mental health problems, and victimization. The risk factors function in a cumulative fashion – the larger the number of risk factors, the greater the likelihood of a negative outcome, such as joining a gang. (Howell, J. C. (2011). *Gang Prevention: An Overview of Research and Programs*. United States: DIANE Publishing Company. The challenge for the problem-solving court team is what actions will prevent the membership or terminate the activity in its early stages. By its very nature, the problem-solving court focuses on prevention and support through case management and therapeutic jurisprudence that addresses the underlying issues surrounding a youth justice case and provides treatment alternatives to incarceration.

African American Empowerment Network

STEP-UP OMAHA! recruits, prepares, and places Omaha youth and young adults aged 14 to 21, in mutually beneficial paid summer jobs and work experience opportunities. Since 2008, the Empowerment Network partners have connected 7,500 youth and young adults to career exploration, jobs, and internships. Participants have gained valuable paid work experience in careers including, but not limited to: health, technology, construction, culinary arts, banking, hospitality, education, manufacturing, retail, service, transportation, entrepreneurship, and others. They have worked in non-profits, small businesses, governmental agencies, and Fortune 500 companies.

Girls Inc. of Omaha

Girls Inc. After Hours will offer a safe space for underserved teen girls to engage in healthy, pro-social activities during high-risk evening hours. During this time, girls will take part in sports and fitness activities, access Girls Inc.'s media lab for homework or STEM projects, and socialize in a flexible, comfortable environment designed specifically for girls.

Girls Inc. After Hours will take place primarily from 6:00-10:00 p.m. Monday-Friday throughout the year. Each day, after Girls Inc.'s regular out-of-school-time programming, concludes and the younger girls go home, the North Omaha Katherine Fletcher Center will remain open for teens in need of a safe place. By offering this fun, flexible program in which teens can feel ownership and independence, Girls Inc. can help to reduce girls' engagement with risky behaviors that could lead them to the juvenile justice system.

Greater Omaha Attendance and Learning Services (GOALS Center)

The purpose of the Family Advocate Program is to provide support to students and their families when absenteeism becomes a concern. Family Advocates provide an intensive case management system for students when school districts have exceeded their resources. In Traditional Services, Family Advocates work with students and their families on average for 6 to 12 months to ensure that a family has the resources and skills needed to continue to support their student's regular school attendance. In the Engagement Outreach tract, Family Advocates work to re-engage students in school so that districts can implement their interventions therefore the length of service is generally between 60 and 120 days. Family Advocates collaborate with families by providing evidence-based assessments, and service plans that identify areas of strength and need within the families, assessments are completed at regular intervals and service plans are reviewed monthly. With a multi-disciplinary, multi-agency, team approach, the program can provide comprehensive assessments, identify school barriers, and

deliver interventions and services to students and families. Family Advocates, who are each assigned to specific students and families, provide supportive services via 1-1 meetings with students, parents, and school staff. These meetings focus on problematic areas, strengths, and progress toward goals. Assessments (i.e., the Ohio Scales, and North Carolina Family Assessment Scales) are used at intake and regular intervals thereafter to assess student and parent strengths, needs, and satisfaction. Collaboratively with caregivers, students, and community resource providers, an individualized service plan is developed for each student along with their family that incorporates assessment results and outlines specific goals and strategies. Family Advocates regularly review this plan with the student and caregiver and monitor progress regarding attendance. As alternate needs arise, Family Advocates work to connect families to community-based resources that can provide additional support. Family Advocates provide regular reports and updates to the schools and the families regarding progress and areas of need.

Hall County

The mission of Hall County's Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI) is to establish a more effective and efficient juvenile detention system. JDAI relies on eight core evidence-based strategies to engage in juvenile justice reform: Community Collaboration; Data Driven Decisions; Objective Admissions; Community-based Detention Alternatives; Case Processing Reform; Special Detention Cases; Reducing Racial & Ethnic Disparities; and Conditions of Confinement. The JDAI Program through the Annie E. Casey Foundation focuses on a framework of four strategies to reduce youth incarceration. The framework calls for juvenile justice systems to significantly and safely reduce the number of youths sent to court-ordered out-of-home placements, reform the standard of care so youths can realize their potential, replace youths' detention with more effective approaches, and reinvest savings into community-based alternatives. These strategies are further focused on race equity, specifically on youths of color, because they are the youths that are most likely to be placed in detention.

Hope Center for Kids, Inc.

The Village Basketball Alliance was formed through collaborative work of Omaha 360 community partners over a decade ago. The original intention was to provide a community basketball league where young people from different neighborhoods in North Omaha, who may not have positive interactions were they to encounter one another on the streets, could have positive, healthy competition with the support of caring adult role models. Men aged 14 and older, some served by various community organizations and Omaha 360 partners, have come together weekly for athletic competition since 2011, made possible by VBA, hosted at the Hope Center for Kids and The Schenzel Community Center (formerly Hope Skate). The Hope Center for Kids offers VBA as an alternative to criminal activities that often take place in the out-of-school hours when youth are not a part of extracurricular activities. Jr. VBA focuses on youth still in their school years (ages 14-19), while VBA's reach includes youth and young adults. Village Basketball Alliance is a preventative program that works to keep youth and young adults away from criminal activities. Omaha has long experienced issues with gangs and violent crimes that are often more pronounced by economic disparities and unemployment. Unemployment and poverty are contributors to higher crime rates. Violent crimes affect the offenders, the families, community residents, service providers, and the city of Omaha as a whole.

Metropolitan Community College

Youth Forward Program (YFP) is a new program designed to meet the needs of at-risk youth involved with the juvenile justice system, a highly marginalized cohort that faces biases and barriers preventing them from living productive and healthy lives. YFP will cultivate safe spaces at select Omaha Public Schools (OPS) high schools to help connect justice-involved youth to academic and career success through mentorship and over 100 credit and non-credit program opportunities at Metropolitan Community College (MCC). Programming will incorporate

blended education and training, access to meaningful career exploration and paid work experiences, job placement, relationships with caring adults, transition planning into postsecondary training or education, and wraparound support to remain on track and succeed. A range of incentives will be provided to students to help them remain focused and on track to high school graduation and postsecondary education and training.

NorthStar Foundation

NorthStar will enhance and expand its comprehensive sequence of athletic engagement and outreach programming for low-income, at-risk male youth in North Omaha in 2023- 2024. The research-tested model of targeted team sports outreach deployed by the AEOP has an established track record of reinforcing the engagement of participants in NorthStar's broader extended learning time (ELT) model and increasing their protective factors against violent gang involvement. The OVP funding will be singularly vital for 2023- 2024 AEOP delivery: ensuring the use of family-centered and culturally responsive interventions, furnishing linkages to external school- and community-based behavioral health providers, and building longitudinal case coordination to support the resilience and success of NorthStar boys in need.

Police Athletics for Community Engagement (PACE)

PACE is a Police Community Relations initiative based on a direct intervention and prevention model created to help underserved and disadvantaged inner-city youth avoid the negative influences of street gangs, crime, and criminal victimization by choosing to be involved in safe, organized, athletic-mentoring programs. PACE officers FREE athletic and educational programming to underserved youth in the Omaha Metro Area. In 2022, PACE served over 5,000 youth. PACE was led by retired Omaha Police Department Gang Unit Officer Tony Espejo. The Director of the PACE program prior to Tony Espejo was investigated and federally indicted which resulted in the Advisory Council's decision to rescind the awarded funds for FY 2024.

Office of Violence Prevention Strategic Plan Updates

Program Site Monitors

By the strategic plan, the Office of Violence Prevention Director conducted program site monitors of the FY 2024 grantees. The purpose of the program site monitors is to further the relationship between the Office of Violence Prevention and the grant recipients. The Director can witness the program environment, speak with the program participants, monitor the use of grant funds and gain insight into future funding needs for stakeholders in the state.

All awarded programs were monitored by former Directors and the current Director of Violence Prevention.

Chicano Awareness Center dba Latino Center of the Midlands

Paul Zeiger (Former Director) and Chris Carlile met with the administrative staff to see the classrooms of the programs funded by OVP. The staff gave a comprehensive presentation on the program.

City of Lincoln

Paul Zeiger (Former Director) and Chris Carlile met with the administrative staff at the Lincoln Police Department's office in downtown Lincoln. The LPD staff gave a comprehensive presentation on the program. The program is growing and are looking to add a second advocate to the team. OTP reported that gang activity in Lincoln Public Schools is now recruiting 5th graders in possible gangs in Lincoln.

City of Omaha

Paul Zeiger (Former Director) and Chris Carlile met with the administrative staff at the Omaha Police Department's office in downtown Omaha. The OPD staff gave a comprehensive presentation on the process of the firearm DNA testing.

Completely KIDS, Inc.

Athena Sherman (Former Director) and Chris Carlile attended an evening site visit to see the teen employment program participants receive an education seminar about self-advocacy. We met with the administrative staff to discuss OVP updates and financial review expectations.

Douglas County Sheriff's Office

Chris Carlile met with Chief Deputy Will Rinn, Sheriff Deputy Jonathan and Captain Eric Sellers. The staff provided a comprehensive overview of the program and gave insight on the actual program that was not explained well in their application.

The Young Adult Court has been very successful at the close monitoring of "at-risk" young adults related to or associated with violent gang members. YAC focuses on keeping options for recruitment into gangs and gang life more difficult or less attractive. There has been a 67% reduction in recidivism since the start of the program with the sheriff deputy. YAC participants are now more familiar and comfortable with the involvement of law enforcement. The sheriff deputy is able to answer specific questions and give examples to the youth of the negative outcomes of not actively working with the program.

Barriers for DCSO has been insufficient personnel and time to follow up the work with YAC participants and to work the violence prevention/gun reduction programs effectively. DCSO would like to expand the program with recommendations from the Director to include data and how the program ties into the scope of Office of Violence Prevention for the next solicitation.

African- American Empowerment Network

Paul Zeiger (Former Director) and Chris Carlile met with administrative staff and the Life Coaches who work closely with the youth. Through collaboration with Omaha 360, the program has identified by the community through weekly meetings that the priorities are to reduce gun violence, improved graduation rates and reduce unemployment.

North Omaha has seen a reduction in gun violence (non-fatal shootings were reduced as much as 70 – 80% and homicides were reduced as much as 50 – 70 %). Step-Up Omaha serves the youth and young adults between the ages of 14 – 21 with opportunities in career exploration, job training, internships and entrepreneurship. The staff are open to recommendations, best practices and additional research that would be available to support their efforts with employment, reducing violence and improving social and economic conditions in Omaha and throughout Nebraska.

Girls Inc. of Omaha

Paul Zeiger (Former Director) and Chris Carlile met with the administrative staff in Omaha. The program gave a comprehensive explanation of their program. The girls in the program receive coaching in skills that employers seek, such as personal accountability, work ethic, time management, and professional etiquette. Girls Inc. staff conduct mock interviews and give performance reviews as feedback for the girls. The girls are placed in service positions at Girls Inc. to help facilitate programs in health and wellness, gardening, healthy cooking, STEM learning and literacy.

Greater Omaha Attendance and Learning Services (GOALS Center)

Paul Zeiger (Former Director) and Chris Carlile met with the administrative staff virtually. The program gave a comprehensive explanation of their program. The staff mentioned their agency is closing their doors and plan to shift the programs to another agency, Urban League.

Hall County

Paul Zeiger (Former Director) and Chris Carlile met with the administrative staff in Grand Island. The staff gave a comprehensive explanation of the responsibilities of the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) Coordinator. Their responsibilities include: planning and coordinating meetings, gathering and analyzing data, interpreting policies and procedures, developing plans to help juvenile justice agencies make systemic changes to juvenile detention practices. The JDAI Coordinator does not do any direct services with youth.

Hope Center for Kids, Inc.

Paul Zeiger (Former Director) and Chris Carlile met with the administrative staff in Omaha. The staff provided a comprehensive explanation of their program. The 12-week program was taking place at the time of the site monitor and provided insight how the Village Basketball Alliance gives an opportunity to reach a population in Northeast Omaha to address the violence through the facilitation of the program.

Metropolitan Community College

Paul Zeiger (Former Director) and Chris Carlile met with administrative staff in Omaha. The staff provided a comprehensive explanation of their Youth Forward program. The YFP Specialist is funded through OVP and works directly with students. The Specialist has an amazing ability to relate to students on a personal and academic level. During SFY24, MCC has served 23 students with 90% minorities with 18 who received A's and 10 made the Dean's List. They have recruited 30 new scholars for the upcoming year.

Unfortunately due to limited OVP funds and not receiving other sources, the program ended June 30, 2024 with the Youth Forward staff being re-assigned to another program at MCC.

NorthStar Foundation

Paul Zeiger (Former Director) and Chris Carlile met with the administrative staff in Omaha. The program gave a comprehensive explanation of their program. NorthStar engages the population of youth that are most likely to fail to graduate high school with a clear 2 and 4 year continuing education or a direct path to employment is the focus of NorthStar high school programming. It program will begin with 3rd grade boys as they enter after-school and athletic programming. By maintain a strong, longitudinal relationship with students as they matriculate from elementary to middle to high school has shown to reduce the risk of students derailing their education trajectory enroute to on time, high school graduation.

Active engagement in activities for which students will make positive sacrifices to participate in are sports. As sports being a primary hook are essential to maintaining engagement and strong adult-student relationships. The staff would like to fund mental health supports with one-on-one counseling and a full time Social Worker. Currently they employ a part time licensed Social Worker through Omaha Public Schools.

Program Evaluations

The agencies provided their external evaluations to the Office of Violence Prevention to assess the overall success of their programs along with the goals of the Office of Violence Prevention. Only three agencies had their programs evaluated in the SFY24 grant year within the past 4 years. The program evaluation was a requirement enforced at the beginning of SFY 24 and will continue to be enforced as it is a statutory requirement. Some agencies are trying to find a cost effective approach to the requirement since grant funds are very limited.

African- American Empowerment Network

The Step-Up Program was evaluated in 2021 – 2022 and was prepared by PPRP Innovations, LLC who led the evaluation. The findings were “ Despite Step-Up Omaha’s large impacts on employment and earnings during the application summer, more work is required to help measure & monitor the sustained impact on longer-term outcomes in adolescents’ outcomes, and the labor market. Every year, efforts are made to customize Step-Up Omaha’s services for different groups of participants based on their ages, personal & career interests, economic & environmental challenges, disability statuses, and other characteristic, but these options serve a small share of participants for logistical and cost-related reasons. The broader evidence base for adolescents’ employment programs suggests that improving longer-term outcomes for young people would require additional, most costly program components that respond to their needs. In order to adjust to these needs, it may be very difficult for a program as large as Step-Up Omaha to add such services. In all, Step-Up Omaha places hundreds of adolescents into summer jobs in a very short time. Without substantial additional resources, it is difficult to incorporate, monitor & measure the process & outcomes related to more intensive program components” (Raheem Sanders, MPH – Lead Evaluator of PPRP Innovations).

The evaluation had recommendations for Step-Up Omaha program enhancement include (but not limited to):

- Enhance resources that provide program adolescents with soft skills & social emotional learning
- Continuous expansion of program services year-round
- Increase worksite partners, relationships and partner opportunities to meet adolescents interest & needs
- Outsource the data management & monitoring of student outcomes

Metropolitan Community College

The Youth Forward Program (YFP) was evaluated in 2022 – 2023 and was prepared by PPRP Innovations, LLC, who led the evaluation. The findings were “In light of these challenges (poverty, trauma and violence), it is clear that the YFP and programs like YFP require additional resources & funding to increase organizational capacity in order to continue to meet the needs of justice-involved youth. By providing these programs with the additional funding and resources needed to enhance services provided to participants & to increase capacity to serve a greater number of participants, this will help to ensure that justice-involved youth in Omaha, Nebraska have the opportunity to succeed in college and in their lives. Based on the data presented, YFP needs to increase the capacity & resources necessary to continue to meet the needs of justice-involved youth. By providing the program with the additional resources they need, YFP can further develop their program into an effective, cost-efficient mechanism that works to ensure that justice-involved youth have a safe space to develop and the opportunity to succeed in college and further in their lives” (Raheem Sanders, MPH – Lead Evaluator of PPRP innovations).

The evaluation had recommendations for Youth Forward Program enhancement include (but not limited to):

- Enhance the capacity to collect & utilize additional participant data

- Quality interactions with faculty & students
- Enhance the capacity to conduct program assessments of student engagement

NorthStar Foundation

The program was evaluated in 2022 -2023 and was prepared by WaltherSeck Associates, LLC, who led the evaluation. The key findings were fewer NorthStar students who attend Omaha Public Schools were chronically absent from school. Parents and students remain highly satisfied with the NorthStar programs, staff and practices with parents indicating that enrichment programming provides additional value as an after-school program. Parents and students both showed reduced ratings of “feeling safe” at NorthStar which is a positive trend from previous years. More students are reporting risk behaviors such as fighting, alcohol use, and carrying a weapon. Rates of these risk behaviors are similar to statewide rates and gang membership remains low.

The evaluation had recommendations for NorthStar programs enhancement include (but not limited to):

- Consider how to improve feelings of safety among both parents and students
- Continue to screen and offer early intervention for students with social-emotional needs and may explore establishing mental healthcare referral pathways
- Strategize about how to mitigate or reduce negative school perceptions with a connection to post-secondary education for assistance
- Administer the surveys only at one time during the 2023 – 2024 year to reduce burden and increase response rate to a larger number of students