

**REPORT OF THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE AUDIT AND  
REVIEW COMMISSION**

**Effects of Community Gun  
Violence in Virginia  
(HJR 76, 2024)**

**TO THE GOVERNOR AND  
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA**



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Report to the Governor and the General Assembly of Virginia

# Effects of Community Gun Violence in Virginia

2025



# Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission

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# Summary: Effects of Community Gun Violence in Virginia

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## WHAT WE FOUND

### Virginia’s gun violence rate is about average compared with other states, but rates in a few Virginia cities are relatively high

Virginia ranks 23rd highest among states for violent firearm offenses, with 88 per 100,000 residents annually on average (slightly below the 50-state average of 93). Virginia’s statewide gun homicide rate was 5.4 per 100,000 people, which was 21<sup>st</sup> highest among the states and equal to the national average.

While Virginia’s gun violence problem statewide is about average compared with other states, certain localities have relatively high rates of gun violence incidents. Just nine Virginia localities accounted for over half of all gun-related homicides in the state (see table, next page). Violent crimes in these nine localities are especially likely to involve a firearm, including 87 percent of murders, 61 percent of robberies, and 56 percent of aggravated assaults (compared with 72 percent of murders, 40 percent of robberies, and 35 percent of aggravated assaults across the rest of the state).

### Community violence is the main driver of higher gun violence levels and puts wider communities at risk

Community violence, which is the focus of this study, was the main type of gun violence in the nine Virginia localities with higher gun violence rates. Community violence is interpersonal violence that often takes place in public spaces and puts the broader community at risk. Community violence not only affects victims and their families but the overall social health of a community. In some neighborhoods, shootings are so frequent that residents fear for their own safety, even if they are not involved in a conflict and are not an intended target. In Virginia’s nine higher gun violence localities, shootings are concentrated in and around a few neighborhoods, with some neighborhoods averaging three or more gun-related homicides annually. For each gun-related homicide, there are several non-fatal shootings, meaning that these neighborhoods experience more gun violence than the homicide data alone indicates.

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## WHY WE DID THIS STUDY

In 2024, the Virginia General Assembly passed House Joint Resolution 76, directing the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) to review the effects of gun violence on communities across the Commonwealth. Specifically, JLARC was directed to assess the impact of gun violence on the physical, mental, and emotional health of individuals living in communities affected by gun violence and the overall social and economic health of those communities.

## ABOUT GUN VIOLENCE IN VIRGINIA

Gun violence encompasses any crime committed with a firearm, from violent crimes (murder, assault, robbery) to those of intimidation (brandishing, non-injury shootings). Over the past 15 years, the proportion of total criminal offenses committed using a firearm grew from 11 percent in 2009 to 16 percent in 2023. Gun crimes make up an even higher proportion of violent crimes. Virginia, like much of the country, recently experienced a surge in gun violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, but gun violence rates have begun to fall. Violent crime in Virginia—including homicides, assaults, and robberies—remains below historical highs.

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**Nine Virginia localities had higher rates of gun-related homicides compared with the rest of the state (2020–2024)**

Locality	Gun-related homicides (5-year annual average)	Gun-related homicide rate (average per 100,000)	Trend (last 3 years)
Petersburg	18	53.8	-58%
Portsmouth	34	34.6	-17%
Richmond city	70	30.5	-9%
Hopewell	6	27.9	-34%
Norfolk	46	19.6	-47%
Roanoke city	17	17.7	-28%
Hampton	23	16.7	-28%
Newport News	28	15.2	18%
Danville	5	12.8	1%
<b>Higher gun violence localities</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>22.9</b>	<b>-24%</b>
<b>Rest of Virginia</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>-20%</b>

SOURCE: JLARC analysis of the Virginia Department of Health’s Virginia Medical Examiner Data System (VMEDS).

The abundance of firearms makes them easily obtainable. Recent estimates place the number of firearms in circulation in the U.S. at 400 million, with 11.6 to 23.4 million new firearms added each year over the last decade. This large pool of guns can be accessed through different means, including legal purchase, illegal purchase, theft, or by obtaining a gun owned by a partner, friend, or family member. The ease of obtaining a gun because of the large number already in circulation, especially in high-gun violence localities, is both a reality and concern consistently expressed by stakeholders interviewed for this study. Data from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives indicates that in about 60 percent of criminal cases in Virginia where firearms were recovered, the person using the gun was not the last known legal purchaser, suggesting that they may not have obtained it legally.

**Firearm injuries tend to be more lethal, severe, and costly to treat than other assault injuries**

Among the many effects of community firearm violence, the most direct are on the physical health of individuals injured by gunshot wounds. Research indicates that victims of firearm assault injuries are more likely to die before reaching the hospital compared with victims of stab wounds, another common type of assault injury, and they are more likely to die from their injuries even if they reach a hospital for care. Furthermore, non-fatal firearm injuries are typically more severe than other types of non-fatal penetrating injuries and blunt trauma.

Firearm injuries are relatively expensive to treat compared with other types of traumatic injuries because they require more resources and longer hospital stays. Analysis

of Virginia healthcare claims data indicates that, statewide, more than one-third of firearm injury patients require inpatient hospital admission. On average, inpatient treatment costs for firearm injuries are about one-and-a-half to two times the cost of treating stab wounds and about two to three times the cost of treating injuries caused by blunt objects or bodily force. In Virginia, inpatient treatment costs range widely based on the severity of the injury and were especially high for the top quartile of cases, which ranged from about \$34,600 to over \$232,000. Medicaid largely bears the initial cost of firearm injuries, though these costs represent a minimal share of total Medicaid expenditures (less than 0.05 percent).

Firearm injury survivors are more likely to require additional care after discharge than survivors of other assault injuries, and many experience long-term health effects. However, many firearm injury survivors have difficulty accessing the follow-up care needed after leaving the hospital, which can lead to poorer long-term health outcomes and higher treatment costs. In Virginia, approximately 30 percent of firearm injury survivors require some further care after being discharged from the hospital.

### **Survivors of firearm injuries and young people exposed to gun violence are at increased risk for developing mental health conditions**

Firearm injury survivors are at significantly higher risk of experiencing several psychiatric disorders compared with people injured through other non-violent means and the general population. One well-designed national study found that psychiatric disorders among firearm injury survivors increased 200 percent relative to control participants in the month after their injury.

Youth and young adults are more likely than other age groups to be exposed to gun violence, and exposure to community gun violence puts young people at risk of a spectrum of developmental challenges and clinical mental health disorders. Research has shown that very young children exposed to trauma or toxic stress are more prone to developmental challenges, including difficulties with emotional regulation, language development, cognitive reasoning, and problem solving and are predisposed to developing clinical mental health conditions later in life. For older children and adolescents, exposure to gun violence often contributes to or exacerbates the development of PTSD, depression, and anxiety, as well as conduct disorders and behavioral challenges associated with emotional regulation. Young people who have been repeatedly exposed to gun violence may be more likely to respond to the shooting of a friend with anger and seek retribution, and they are also more likely to carry firearms for protection, significantly increasing their risk of involvement in a violent incident.

Each of the nine localities with the highest rates of community firearm violence in Virginia are designated as mental health professional shortage areas for low-income populations, according to the Health Resources and Services Administration. Mental health providers, hospital staff, and staff of other community-based organizations in these communities reported that there is an especially pronounced shortage of

trauma-focused, culturally competent mental health services in their communities, especially for youth.

### **Gun violence negatively affects local economies, including business activity and property values**

A growing body of research literature has found that violent crime—and gun violence in particular—depresses business activity. Bar and restaurant owners in several of Virginia’s higher gun violence localities reported closing early because they see little traffic later in the evening and are concerned about customer and employee safety. They indicated that while commercial areas are generally safe, they are often perceived as unsafe due to shootings or violent crimes that occur late at night. Over the longer term, areas with persistently higher levels of shootings and violent crime can see reduced business. Several studies have found that an increase in gunshots or violent crime was associated with fewer new businesses and the downsizing or loss of existing businesses. Operating businesses in higher gun violence communities can also be expensive and complex. For example, businesses in these areas often must pay for enhanced security measures and higher insurance premiums.

Violent crimes, including shootings, are associated with reduced residential and commercial real estate values. For example, one study found that a 10 percent increase in violent crimes in a neighborhood reduced housing values by as much as 6 percent, and another study found that each day with a nearby gunfire incident reduced sales prices by 9.6 percent. Commercial property values can also be affected by nearby violent crime, making it more difficult to fully lease spaces and depressing market lease rates. Depressed values affect property owners and local governments, who rely on real estate property taxes for 50 percent of their revenue, on average.

### **Increased gun violence can strain already short-staffed law enforcement agencies**

High levels of gun violence strain local law enforcement, affecting their operational capacity, particularly during officer shortages. Statewide, the number of full-time law enforcement officers declined about 3 percent from 2020 to 2022. However, departments in several higher gun violence localities had much larger declines, including Richmond, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Hampton, Petersburg, and Roanoke city. As the local entity primarily responsible for preventing, responding to, and investigating incidents, increases in gun-related violent crimes like homicides and assaults divert limited law enforcement resources from lower-crime areas and other investigations. Responding to these incidents can require more personnel (e.g., securing a perimeter) and longer times to clear crime scenes. Investigating and prosecuting gun violence incidents is also personnel- and time-intensive.

## **Community gun violence negatively affects student attendance and classroom engagement, exacerbates school staffing issues**

Public schools serving communities with higher levels of gun violence face distinct and complex challenges that negatively affect students and staff. Exposure to gun violence leads to trauma and fear among students, reducing their sense of safety, and increasing absenteeism and disruptive behaviors. A 2024 survey conducted by the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) found high school students in Virginia's nine higher gun violence localities were more likely than the statewide average to report they do not feel safe traveling between home and school and while on school grounds or in hallways and bathrooms. School divisions in communities with high gun violence rates also have higher chronic absenteeism rates than the state average. Research literature links exposure to community violence to lower test scores, increased grade level repetition, and decreased high school graduation rates.

For school staff in higher gun violence communities, the threat of violence and emotional strain worsen recruitment and retention, resulting in higher vacancy rates than the state average. This environment also necessitates increased security investments, such as more infrastructure and personnel; divisions in the nine highest-violence localities employ an average of 3.2 security staff per 1,000 students, compared with 2.0 elsewhere.

## **Strategies for preventing and addressing gun violence effects have been implemented to varying degrees in higher gun violence localities**

Addressing community gun violence requires effective prevention and intervention programs, combined with programs that respond to gun violence incidents. In Virginia, all nine higher gun violence localities have city- or nonprofit-operated "intensive mentorship-based prevention programs" for high-risk youth that include the key elements that research has found necessary for them to be effective. Additionally, several Virginia localities have credible messenger "violence interruption programs," including Newport News, Norfolk, Hampton, Hopewell, Portsmouth, and Roanoke city. In addition, most Virginia localities with high gun violence rates also have hospital-based violence intervention programs, which engage with injured gun violence survivors during the critical period when victims are in the hospital immediately following an assault to help prevent retaliation and reinjury. Some localities in Virginia have developed dedicated stabilization and case management teams to provide immediate, non-medical assistance to victims, families, and communities following gun violence incidents. While a locality may have one or several of these different programs in place, gaps in programming and services still exist, and existing programs do not necessarily reach all communities and individuals in need.

A community also needs effective law enforcement and criminal prosecution to address gun violence. Across Virginia's higher gun violence localities, police departments

reported using a variety of strategies to better respond to and prevent future incidents. These initiatives range from new staffing models designed to ensure timely investigation of gun violence incidents to gunshot detection systems for quickly pinpointing and responding to incidents. Research literature suggests that the staffing and technology strategies being used in these Virginia localities are effective at responding to and reducing gun violence. Additionally, police departments are expanding their community engagement initiatives to improve relations and reduce gun violence. These initiatives are funded by several sources, including state funds. State grant funds have also been used to help provide additional resources for commonwealth's attorney offices in several higher gun violence localities.

### **Relatively new state programs and funding have facilitated local responses, but additional assistance should be considered for some higher gun violence localities**

While local governments are best positioned to provide the central leadership, planning, and coordination for gun violence prevention programs, the state can provide technical assistance and funding to help ensure that Virginia localities most affected by gun violence are able to implement well-designed and well-coordinated programs.

State initiatives to support local gun violence reduction efforts have increased significantly over the past few years. Between FY21 and FY26, the state increased the funds appropriated to support local efforts by about \$30 million. The state also established the DCJS Office of Safer Communities, which oversees three gun violence reduction funding programs: Safer Communities (established in 2023), Firearm Violence Intervention and Prevention (FVIP, 2022), and Operation Ceasefire (2022).

Most of Virginia's nine higher gun violence localities have received some gun violence reduction assistance from the state, but funding and technical assistance is not distributed based on need. For example, Petersburg has the highest annual average gun homicide rate in the state yet receives only 1 percent of all state program funds for gun violence response (see table, next page). Additionally, Hampton and Newport News have gun homicide rates comparable to Roanoke city, but they receive 3 percent and 2 percent of state program funds, respectively. Furthermore, the state's largest gun violence reduction funding program, Safer Communities, provides funding for only four of Virginia's higher gun violence localities. Localities that do receive Safer Communities funding have reported difficulty spending their appropriated funding because of restrictive disbursement and spending rules that have hindered planning and effective program implementation.

In addition, DCJS regularly convenes "community of practice" meetings with funding recipients, including FVIP and Operation Ceasefire grantees and the Safer Communities localities, but not all the higher gun violence localities meet together. These meetings are used to share information on state initiatives and administrative matters, highlight emerging program designs, discuss local implementation of gun violence reduction strategies, and provide a general forum for information exchange. However,

none of these meetings include all nine localities with the highest rates of gun violence. For example, meetings about the Safer Communities initiative do not include Hampton, Newport News, Danville, Hopewell, and Petersburg, even though officials in these cities would likely benefit from participating.

### State funding for gun violence reduction efforts through DCJS (FY21–FY26)

	Safer Communities	FVIP	Operation Ceasefire	Other gun violence funds	Total	Percentage of state program funds
Danville	-	\$424,810	-	-	\$424,810	1%
Hampton	-	\$25,000	\$818,330	\$1,300,000	\$2,143,330	3%
Hopewell	-	\$300,000	-	-	\$300,000	0.4%
Newport News	-	\$629,076	\$609,999	\$500,000	\$1,739,075	2%
Norfolk	\$10,534,462	\$2,400,000	\$113,753	-	\$13,048,215	16%
Petersburg	-	\$247,229	\$585,344	-	\$832,573	1%
Portsmouth	\$ 8,715,182	\$1,176,000	\$467,257	\$495,394	\$10,853,833	14%
Richmond city	\$10,421,335	\$579,446	\$1,149,274	\$500,000	\$12,650,055	16%
Roanoke city	\$ 5,904,021	\$772,999	\$200,000	\$500,000	\$ 7,377,020	9%
Other localities	-	\$1,886,463	\$12,498,235	-	\$14,384,698	18%
Hospitals	-	\$13,550,675	-	-	\$13,550,675	17%
State agencies	-	-	\$2,856,044	-	\$2,856,044	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$35,575,000</b>	<b>\$21,991,698</b>	<b>\$19,298,236</b>	<b>\$3,295,394</b>	<b>\$80,160,328</b>	<b>100%</b>

SOURCE: JLARC staff analysis.

NOTE: Dollars shown are actual grant awards, which were less than total funds appropriated. See Table 5-2 in Chapter 5 for full table notes.

## WHAT WE RECOMMEND

### Legislative action

- Allow unspent Safer Communities grant funding to revert to the state at the end of the biennium for which it was appropriated, rather than annually.
- Direct DCJS to periodically evaluate if changes are needed to how Safer Communities funds are distributed among Virginia localities (such as changes to the formula for distributing funds).
- Direct DCJS to periodically evaluate if changes are needed to funding amounts or qualifications for FVIP and Operation Ceasefire grants.

### Executive action

- DCJS should expand its “community of practice” meetings to include representatives from Danville, Hampton, Hopewell, Newport News, Norfolk, Petersburg, Portsmouth, Richmond, and Roanoke city.

## **POLICY OPTION FOR CONSIDERATION**

Staff typically propose policy options rather than make recommendations when (i) the action is a policy judgment best made by elected officials—especially the General Assembly, (ii) evidence suggests action could potentially be beneficial, or (iii) a report finding could be addressed in multiple ways.

- Amend the Appropriation Act to extend Safer Communities funding to the cities of Danville, Hampton, Hopewell, Newport News, and Petersburg.

The complete list of recommendations is available on page ix.

# Recommendations and Policy Option: Effects of Community Gun Violence in Virginia

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JLARC staff typically make recommendations to address findings during reviews. Staff also sometimes propose policy options rather than recommendations. The three most common reasons staff propose policy options rather than recommendations are: (1) the action proposed is a policy judgment best made by the General Assembly or other elected officials, (2) the evidence indicates that addressing a report finding is not necessarily required, but doing so could be beneficial, or (3) there are multiple ways in which a report finding could be addressed and there is insufficient evidence of a single best way to address the finding.

## Recommendations

### RECOMMENDATION 1

The General Assembly may wish to consider amending the Appropriation Act to establish Safer Communities as a biennially reverting special fund administered by the Department of Criminal Justice Services, instead of appropriating funds directly to recipients, to give recipient localities sufficient time to use the funding for effective planning and program implementation. (Chapter 5)

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### RECOMMENDATION 2

The General Assembly may wish to consider amending the Appropriation Act to direct the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) to periodically evaluate if changes are needed to the distribution of Safer Communities funding among Virginia localities and make any recommendations for changes in the DCJS Office of Safer Communities' annual report to the General Assembly. (Chapter 5)

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### RECOMMENDATION 3

The General Assembly may wish to consider amending the Appropriation Act to direct the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) to periodically evaluate if changes are needed to funding or program qualifications for the Firearm Violence Intervention and Prevention Fund or the Operation Ceasefire Grant Fund and make any recommendations for changes in the DCJS Office of Safer Communities' annual report. (Chapter 5)

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### RECOMMENDATION 4

The Department of Criminal Justice Services should expand its community of practice meetings to include regular meetings of representatives from Virginia's nine higher gun violence localities: Danville, Hampton, Hopewell, Newport News, Norfolk, Petersburg, Portsmouth, Richmond, and the City of Roanoke. (Chapter 5)

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## **Policy Options to Consider**

### **POLICY OPTION 1**

The General Assembly could amend the Appropriation Act to extend Safer Communities funding to the cities of Danville, Hampton, Hopewell, Newport News, and Petersburg. (Chapter 5)

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# 1 Overview of Gun Violence in Virginia

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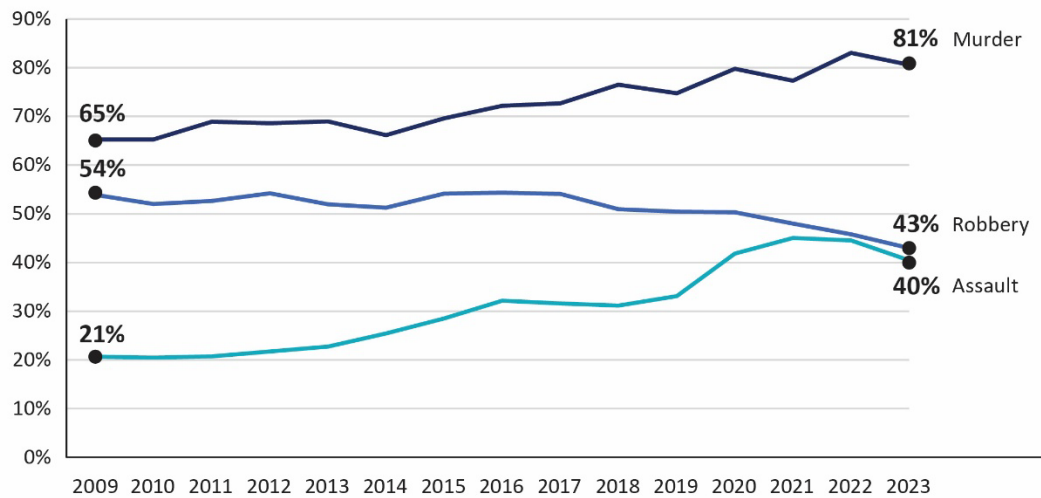
In 2024, the Virginia General Assembly passed House Joint Resolution 76, directing the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) to review the effects of gun violence on communities across the Commonwealth. Specifically, JLARC was directed to assess the impact of gun violence on the physical, mental, and emotional health of individuals living in communities affected by gun violence and the overall social and economic health of those communities. JLARC was also directed to consider and propose policy recommendations to address gun violence and its effects. (See Appendix A for the study resolution.)

To complete this study, JLARC staff conducted over 120 interviews with state officials, subject-matter experts, and representatives from the nine Virginia localities that are most affected by gun violence. Local representatives were drawn from over 120 different city manager offices, police departments, other municipal departments, school divisions, commonwealth’s attorney offices, hospitals, and nonprofit community-based organizations. JLARC staff also interviewed individuals who have been directly impacted by gun violence in Virginia. JLARC staff analyzed state and national public health and crime data and conducted thorough reviews of research literature on gun violence, violent crime, and approaches for preventing, intervening, and responding to gun violence. (See Appendix B for more information on methods used for this study.)

## **Gun-related violence accounts for a relatively high number of crimes and deaths**

Gun violence is typically considered a criminal justice issue, encompassing any crime committed with a firearm, from violent crimes (murder, assault, robbery) to those of intimidation (brandishing, non-injury shootings). Gun violence is of special concern because guns are involved in an increasing share of total crimes and a substantial share of violent crimes. Over the past 15 years, the proportion of total criminal offenses committed in Virginia using a firearm grew from 11 percent in 2009 to 16 percent in 2023. Gun crimes also make up an even higher proportion of violent crimes. From 2009–2023, firearms were used in an average of 74 percent of murders, 52 percent of robberies, and 32 percent of aggravated assaults statewide (Figure 1-1). Data also shows that the victims and offenders in these crimes are most often males, particularly Black males.

**FIGURE 1-1**  
**Firearms are used to commit a substantial proportion of violent crimes statewide (2009–2023)**



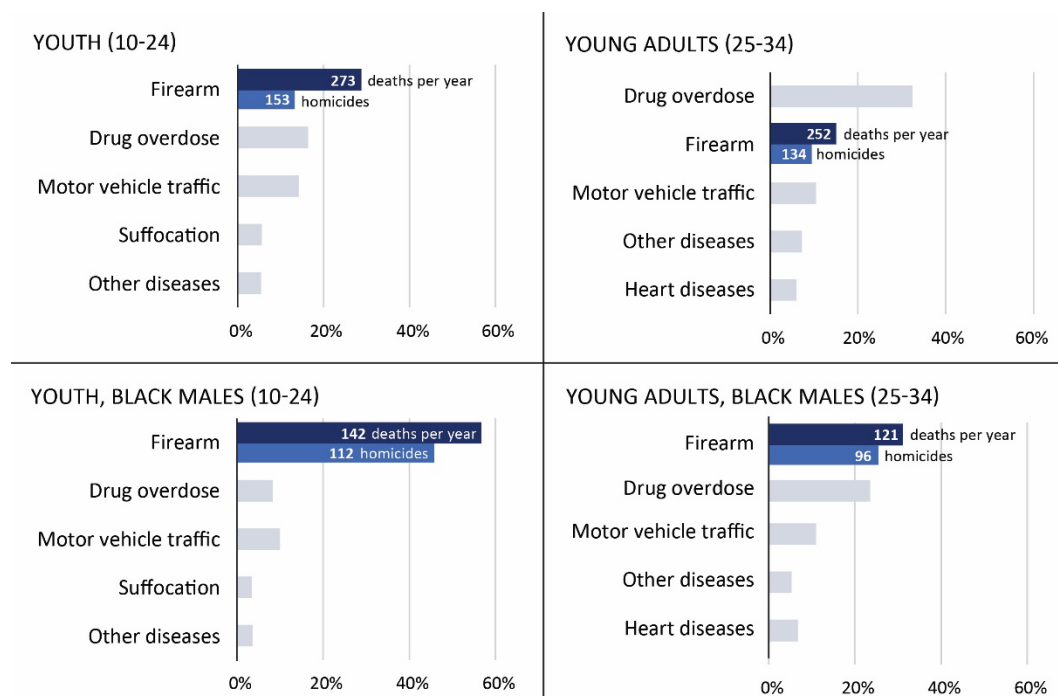
SOURCE: Virginia State Police Incident-Based Reporting System data, 2009–2023.

Gun violence is sometimes framed as a public health concern, which includes both criminal and non-criminal firearm deaths and injuries. Under this definition, gun violence includes interpersonal violence (homicide, assault), self-harm (suicide, attempted suicide), and accidental shootings (unintentional or unexpected firearm discharge). Compared to all other causes of death in public health data, gun-related injuries were the leading cause of death among Virginia youth (ages 10 to 24), accounting for 29 percent of all reported deaths (2019–2023). In addition, gun-related deaths were the second leading cause of death among young adults (ages 25 to 34). Homicides accounted for a majority of these gun deaths, and homicides alone were one of the leading causes of death for both age groups (Figure 1-2). Virginia’s gun-related mortality trends are similar to national trends.

In Virginia, Black families are especially affected by gun deaths. Gun-related injuries are responsible for a higher share of deaths among young Black males, where they accounted for 57 percent of deaths among youth and 31 percent among young adults (Figure 1-2). Homicides accounted for the vast majority of these gun deaths and were especially high among Black male youth, where they accounted for twice as many deaths as the next four leading causes combined.

**FIGURE 1-2**

**Gun-related injuries are a leading cause of death among Virginia youth and young adults, and are especially high for Black males (2019–2023)**



SOURCE: JLARC analysis of Center for Disease Control (CDC) data, 2019–2023.

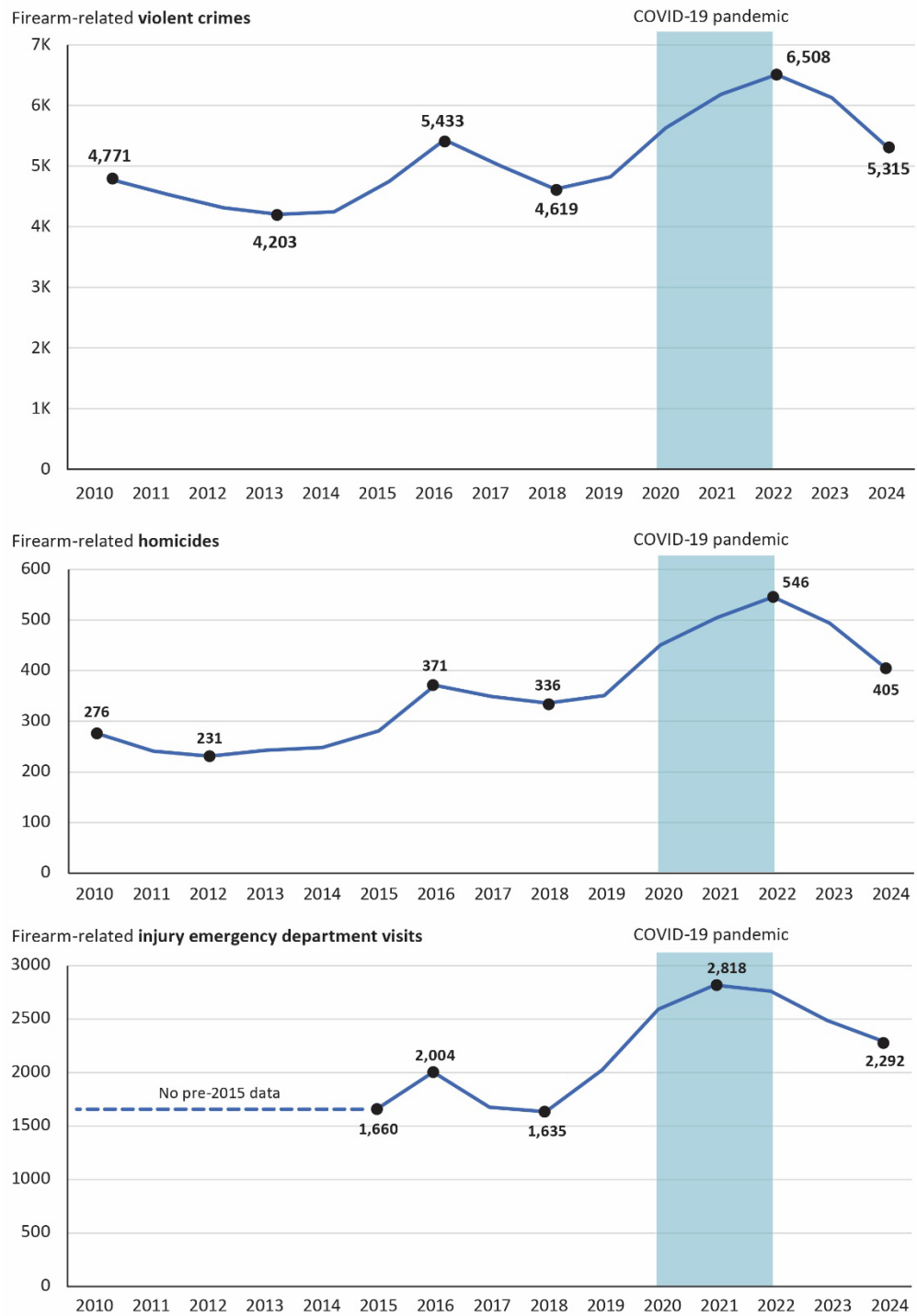
NOTE: Firearm deaths include deaths from gun-related homicides, suicides, accidental injuries, and legal interventions. Other diseases include deaths from a wide variety of diseases not otherwise forming their own category in CDC data. For example, heart disease, cancers, and other common diseases have their own categories, whereas the 'other diseases' category includes several less common diseases.

## Gun violence increased substantially during the pandemic and briefly approached historical highs

Virginia, like much of the country, recently experienced a surge in gun violence. Gun violence in the state ticked up briefly in 2016, suddenly increased in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, peaked around 2022, and then started to fall. All three gun violence indicators—gun-related violent crimes, homicides, and injuries—followed this same trend (Figure 1-3). Virginia’s trends followed national trends. While research has not determined the exact reasons for these trends, researchers generally agree they are rooted in the social disruptions caused by the pandemic.

**FIGURE 1-3**

**Gun violence in Virginia increased prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic but has started to decline**



SOURCE: JLARC analysis of Virginia State Police and Virginia Department of Health data, 2010–2024.  
 NOTE: Violent crimes include murders, assaults, and robberies. Firearm-related injury emergency department visits include injuries from assaults and self-inflicted gunshot wounds (accidental and intentional).

Despite the recent peak in gun violence, violent crime in Virginia—including homicides, assaults, and robberies—remains well below historical highs. Violent crime in Virginia was at its highest from 1990–1994, during the height of the crack cocaine epidemic in the state. Violent crime declined to all-time lows in the 2010s and remained relatively low until surging upward during the pandemic. However, for the most recent peak period (2020–2024), homicide rates were 28 percent lower, aggravated assault rates were 19 percent lower, and robbery rates were 73 percent lower than they were from 1990–1994.

Although *overall* violent crime in Virginia in recent years did not reach historical highs, *gun-related* homicide rates were close because the proportion of homicides involving firearms has increased. For most of the past 40 years, gun-related homicides accounted for between 60 to 70 percent of all homicides in Virginia. However, over the last five years they accounted for 81 percent of homicides (Table 1-1). With the increased involvement of firearms, the rates of gun-related homicides during the recent peak period approached the historical highs from 1990–94. In 2022, the gun-related homicide rate was equal to the highest annual rates of the early 1990s.

**TABLE 1-1**  
Recent peak in gun-related homicide rates approached historical highs, although overall homicide rates remained lower

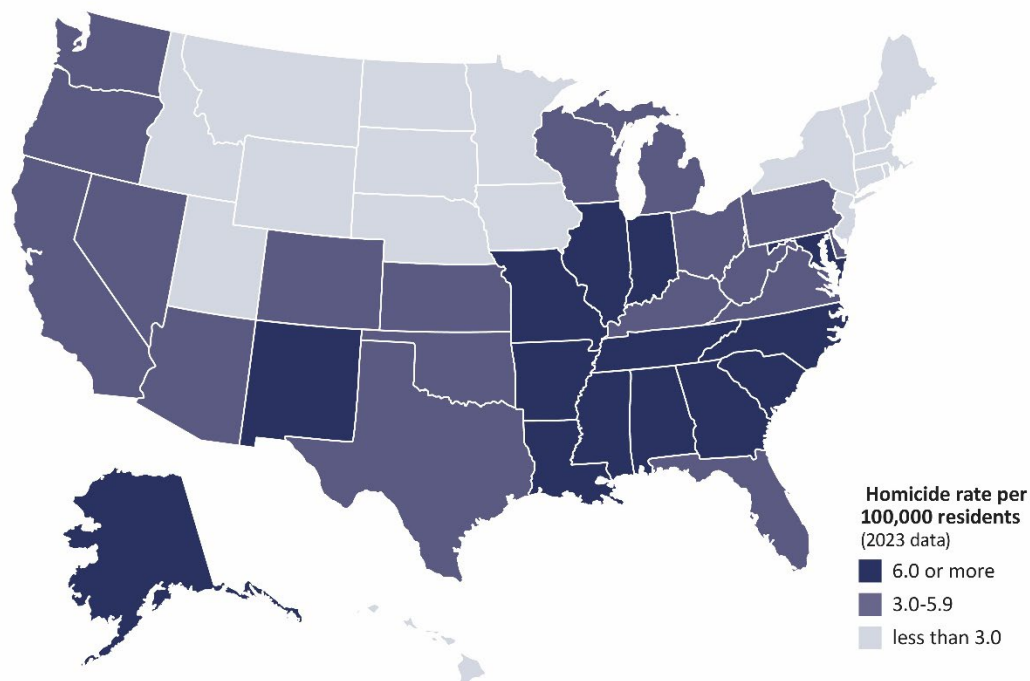
Period	Homicide rate (per 100,000)	Gun-related homicide rate (per 100,000)	Percentage of homicides involving gun
1990–1994 (historical peak)	8.8	5.9	67%
2020–2024 (recent peak)	6.3	5.1	81%

SOURCE: JLARC analysis of Federal Bureau of Investigations Uniform Crime Reporting Program expanded homicide and U.S. Census population data.

## Virginia’s gun violence rate is close to the national average, but rates in a few cities are relatively high

Virginia’s gun violence rate is about average compared with other states. Focusing on the most recent year of *national* data available, in 2023 Virginia’s statewide gun-related homicide rate was 21st highest among the states and about the same as the 50-state average of 5.1 (Figure 1-4). By comparison, Mississippi had the highest gun-related homicide rate (16.8), and New Hampshire had the lowest (1.0). Similarly, Virginia ranks 23rd among states for violent firearm offenses, with 88 violent firearm offenses per 100,000 residents annually on average from 2019–2023 (slightly below the 50-state average of 93).

**FIGURE 1-4**  
**Virginia ranks in the middle of other states for gun-related homicide rates (2023)**



SOURCE: JLARC analysis of CDC data, 2023.

NOTE: Nationally, the 50-state average homicide rate was 5.1 per 100,000 in population in 2023. Virginia’s rate for 2023 was 5.4 homicides per 100,000.

Although Virginia’s statewide gun violence rate is about average, several Virginia localities have relatively high gun-related homicide rates. Nine Virginia localities accounted for over half of all gun-related homicides in the state, with homicide rates that were three-to-15 times higher than the rest of the state (Table 1-2). Despite their relatively higher rates, gun-related homicides have been declining in most of these localities since homicides peaked statewide in 2022. While complete homicide data is not yet available for 2025, police departments in most of these localities indicated homicides in 2025 were on pace to be lower than 2024. For a full discussion of how the nine higher gun violence localities were identified, see Appendix B. For summary statistics on gun-related homicides and crimes for these and other Virginia localities, see Appendix C.

In these high gun violence localities, firearms are used in a larger proportion of crimes, especially violent ones, compared with the rest of the state. From 2019–2023, firearms were used in an average of 28 percent of offenses in high gun violence localities, compared with 13 percent across the rest of the state. Violent crimes in high gun violence localities are especially likely to involve a firearm, including 87 percent of murders, 61 percent of robberies, and 56 percent of aggravated assaults (compared with 72 percent

of murders, 40 percent of robberies, and 35 percent of aggravated assaults across the rest of the state).

**TABLE 1-2**  
**Nine Virginia localities had higher rates of gun-related homicides compared with the rest of the state (2020–2024)**

Locality	Gun-related homicides (5-year annual average)	Gun-related homicide rate (average per 100,000)	Trend (last 3 years)
Petersburg	18	53.8	-58%
Portsmouth	34	34.6	-17%
Richmond city	70	30.5	-9%
Hopewell	6	27.9	-34%
Norfolk	46	19.6	-47%
Roanoke city	17	17.7	-28%
Hampton	23	16.7	-28%
Newport News	28	15.2	18%
Danville	5	12.8	1%
<b>Higher gun violence localities</b>	<b>247</b>	<b>22.9</b>	<b>-24%</b>
<b>Rest of Virginia</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>-20%</b>

SOURCE: JLARC analysis of the Virginia Department of Health’s Virginia Medical Examiner Data System (VMEDS).

NOTE: Trend shows the percent change in the gun-related homicide rate from 2022 to 2024.

The gun violence rates in a few Virginia cities are comparable to large cities in other states, but the number of violent incidents is much smaller. For example, gun-related homicide *rates* in Petersburg, Portsmouth, and Norfolk were comparable to rates for New Orleans, Philadelphia, and East Kansas City, which had among the highest gun-related homicide rates in the country. However, the annual *number* of gun related homicides in these Virginia cities was much lower, ranging from 18 to 46 homicides per year compared with 160 to over 400 per year for these larger cities. So, while Virginia cities clearly face gun violence that needs to be addressed, the violence is on a smaller scale than in large cities around the country with equally high gun violence rates.

## JLARC’s study focused on community gun violence

Both recent and historical increases in gun violence have been largely driven by interpersonal violence—homicides, assaults, robberies, and other non-fatal shootings—instead of self-harm or accidental shootings. This study focused on *community* violence, which is interpersonal violence that often takes place in public spaces and puts the broader community at risk. In this way, community violence is different from other forms of interpersonal violence, such as domestic intimate partner or family violence.

## **Community violence is main driver of higher gun violence levels and puts wider communities at risk**

“*In communities affected by gun violence, you don’t see people outside walking, riding bikes, sitting on porches. No people playing sports. If you’re doing sports, you’re only doing it in the league and not out in public. It hurts the community; it takes a lot away. We’re letting the violence change what we do, change how we live our lives.*”

– **Community program leader**

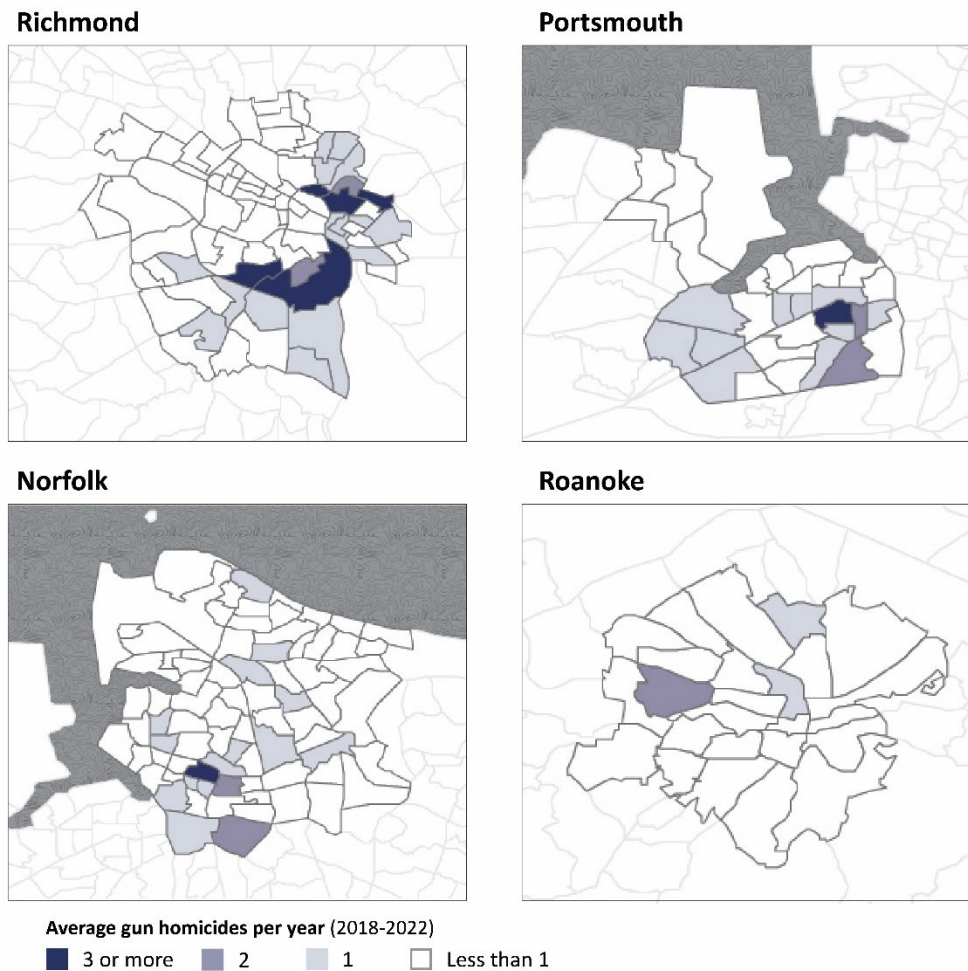
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Community violence is of special concern because it was the main driver of gun violence in Virginia’s nine higher gun violence localities. Sixty-five percent of gun-related homicides in higher gun violence localities occurred in public or publicly accessible areas—such as streets, sidewalks, parking lots, or motor vehicles—compared with 38 percent in the rest of the state. While state data does not provide comprehensive information on shooter-victim relationships, a much larger share of homicides in the higher gun violence localities are between people without a documented personal relationship, whereas in the rest of the state a greater share of homicides are attributable to intimate partner violence or familial disputes.

Community violence is a significant concern because it not only affects the victims but the overall social health of a community. In some neighborhoods, shootings are so frequent that residents fear for their own safety, even if they are not involved in a conflict and are not an intended target. For example, in Virginia’s nine higher gun violence localities, shootings are concentrated in and around a few neighborhoods, with some areas averaging three or more gun-related homicides annually (Figure 1-5). For each gun-related homicide, there are several more shootings where someone is injured or is shot at but not hit, meaning that these areas experience even more gun violence than the homicide data indicates. Community violence has resulted in deaths and life-altering injuries to innocent bystanders, including children and elderly individuals who were hit by stray bullets, in some cases while inside their own homes. Community representatives said that residents of these communities often stay away from parks and other public places, do not allow their children to play outside, and do not venture out after dark for fear of being caught up in violence. For maps showing where gun homicides are concentrated in the state’s nine higher gun violence localities, see Appendix D.

**FIGURE 1-5**

**In localities with higher rates of gun violence, violence is primarily occurring within a few neighborhoods**



SOURCE: JLARC staff analysis of Virginia Department of Health Violent Death Reporting System data, 2018–2022.

NOTE: Figure shows the average annual number of gun-related homicides recorded in each census tract for a five-year period. For example, if there was only one gun-related homicide in a census tract over five years, that tract would average less than one per year. If there was one gun-related homicide in the tract every year, that tract would average one per year. “1” indicates an average of 1.0 to 1.9 gun-related homicides per year, and “2” indicates an average of 2.0 to 2.9 gun-related homicides per year.

### **Community violence is frequently driven by interpersonal disputes and is sometimes associated with criminal activity**

Community violence is frequently driven by interpersonal disputes. Many interpersonal disputes are sudden and impulsive, emerging from arguments between strangers or acquaintances. For example, an argument outside a store could escalate to one or both parties drawing guns and shooting at each other. Other interpersonal disputes can be related to longstanding grudges between individuals, such as from a past argument, which leads to an in-person fight that escalates to a shooting or a targeted killing.

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**Expressive violence** includes acts where the main motive is to harm the other person, often because the perpetrator is angered in an argument or fight.

**Instrumental violence** includes acts where the main motive is to achieve some other goal, such as shooting someone during a robbery or killing rival gang members to expand gang power.

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Social media reportedly contributes to both the start and perpetuation of grudges that lead to violence by facilitating an ongoing cycle of insults and threats. Because much of this happens in public forums, it puts compounding pressure on the parties involved to “settle it” with violence. Police chiefs in higher gun violence localities confirmed that many of the shootings they encounter daily are *expressive* acts of violence related to interpersonal disputes (sidebar). State data indicates that at least one-third of gun-related homicides in Virginia were preceded by an argument or fight, which likely includes both sudden and pre-existing disputes that escalated into deadly shootings. Police chiefs and prosecutors in several of Virginia’s higher gun violence localities noted that shootings resulting from sudden escalations appeared to be more common now than in the past.

Community violence is also associated with other criminal activity, often mixed in with interpersonal disputes. State data indicates that at least one-quarter of gun-related homicides in Virginia were related to some other criminal activity, most often drug dealing or drug use (e.g., the shooter robbed and killed the victim to obtain drugs or money for drugs; 2018 to 2022). Other criminal activities that were sometimes associated with gun violence included robberies and gang activity. Criminal activity can often be intertwined with interpersonal disputes, such as disputes over drug debts or longstanding grudges between neighborhood gangs (e.g., seeking retribution for a past shooting).

Even if a shooting was related to a criminal activity, the victim who was injured or killed was not necessarily involved in anything criminal. For example, a victim could be shot while being robbed or hit by a stray bullet from a targeted killing down the block.

### **Community violence stemming from gangs represents a smaller share of incidents, and mass shootings are relatively rare**

Virginia police and community representatives gave conflicting assessments of how much community violence is gang related, but data indicates these incidents likely accounted for a relatively small portion of homicides in recent years. Only 4 to 8 percent of state homicides were categorized as gang-related in law enforcement and medical examiner reports, and those percentages were similar across the higher gun violence localities and the rest of the state. One reason gang violence appears to have decreased is that the drug trade has shifted mostly online. Consequently, there are no longer “turf wars” to control drug dealing territory.

Mass shootings are another type of community violence that captures attention because of the number of deaths involved and because they sometimes occur in places or at times of day where violence does not typically occur. While tragic, mass shootings account for a relatively small portion of homicide deaths and are relatively infrequent. For example, from 2018 to 2022, the most recent years for which detailed state data is available, Virginia had 13 incidents where there were three or more gun-related homicide deaths, and they accounted for 4 percent of all homicide victims. Of these

“*Some of our violence involves groups or gangs that were known to each other, but ultimately the more direct reason is disputes gone bad.*”

– Police chief

“*The shootings we see now are mostly expressive violence. People leave their house armed, not intending to kill someone, then get in an argument and kill someone.*”

– Police chief

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incidents, the majority are best classified as domestic violence incidents, where the shooting took place in a home, and the shooter was in a relationship or related to one or more of the victims. While this does not make these incidents any less tragic, it does indicate that mass shootings have not been a major driver of community violence.

### **Some community violence involves stolen firearms, but it is difficult to determine how many illegally obtained firearms are used in crimes**

Firearms used in crimes can be obtained illegally in several ways. Guns are frequently stolen, such as from cars, family members, or others sharing the same residence (side-bar). Additionally, individuals may illegally purchase firearms from an unauthorized seller or use a straw purchaser (e.g., a friend, acquaintance, or family member with a clean record) to buy the gun on their behalf if they cannot do so legally.

Illegally obtained firearms are regularly used to commit crimes, but it is difficult to reliably estimate the proportion of incidents involving them. Because many weapons used in crimes are never recovered, police are often unable to determine whether the firearm was obtained illegally. For firearms that are recovered, the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) conducts crime gun tracing—looking at past sales and purchasers—to provide investigative leads to law enforcement agencies. ATF data shows that in about 60 percent of Virginia criminal cases where firearms were recovered, the person using the gun was not the last known legal purchaser, suggesting that it may not have been obtained legally. However, without more comprehensive data on whether the firearms were stolen or illegally purchased, it is not possible to draw further conclusions.

The abundance of firearms makes them easily obtainable, including in communities with higher levels of gun violence. One recent study estimated there are 400 million firearms in circulation in the U.S., and 11.6 to 23.4 million new firearms were added annually over the past decade. That provides a large pool of guns in circulation that can be accessed through different ways, including illegal purchase, theft, or by obtaining a gun owned by a partner, friend, or family member. The ease of obtaining a gun because of the large number already in circulation, including in high-gun violence localities, is both a reality and concern consistently expressed by stakeholders interviewed for this study.

### **Virginia has established laws to regulate legal sale, ownership, and carrying of firearms**

Virginia, like other states, has established gun purchase and possession laws to regulate the legal sale, ownership, and public carrying of firearms by citizens. These laws are generally intended to protect public safety and help ensure responsible firearm ownership. State laws must be in accordance with federally established constitutional rights, and the legality of state laws regulating firearms has often been challenged.

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**In 2020, the General Assembly passed HB 9,** which requires individuals to report a lost or stolen firearm to law enforcement within 48 hours, with a violation punishable by a civil penalty up to \$250.

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JLARC staff reviewed available research literature—and summaries of research literature—evaluating the effectiveness of more common types of firearm laws in preventing or reducing gun violence. One of the key resources for this review was work performed by the RAND Corporation (RAND) Gun Policy in America Project. RAND reviewed thousands of studies published between January 1995 and February 2023 related to 18 state-level gun policies (typically implemented through state and local laws) to understand how these laws affect different outcomes (e.g., gun-related homicides, non-fatal shootings, suicide, unintentional injury and death).

## **State and local laws must be consistent with federal constitutional rights**

The Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution establishes the “right to bear arms” for American citizens, and its proper interpretation and application to state and local laws have been subject to extensive legal challenges. In the past 20 years, the U.S. Supreme Court has issued several landmark rulings clarifying individual gun rights and the limits of state and local government authority, with the most recent being the 2022 *Bruen* decision. Through these decisions, the court has established that individuals have a right to possess firearms for lawful purposes, which includes the right to carry firearms in public.

- **New York State Rifle & Pistol Association, Inc. v. Bruen (2022).** Ruled individuals have a constitutional right to carry a firearm in public for self-defense, and firearm regulation must have some historical grounding.
- **McDonald v. City of Chicago (2010).** Ruled laws enacted by state and local governments to restrict firearm possession cannot infringe upon the constitutional right to possess firearms.
- **District of Columbia v. Heller (2008).** Ruled individuals have constitutional right to possess firearms for lawful purposes, unconnected with service in a militia, but restrictions are allowed.

Under the framework established by the U.S. Constitution and federal laws, state and local governments have the authority to pass laws regulating the legal sale, ownership, and public carrying of firearms by citizens subject to the limitations set by the courts. Firearms can be restricted from private property and sensitive public places (e.g., schools, courthouses), and some categories of individuals can lose their possession rights (e.g., felons, mentally ill, people under restraining orders) if imposing such restrictions is consistent with historical practices. The U.S. Supreme Court has previously indicated that objective licensing requirements such as background checks, fingerprinting, and safety training requirements are also allowed. However, following the 2022 *Bruen* decision, the constitutionality of certain state and local gun laws around the country is being challenged through multiple state and federal court cases.

## Certain laws may reduce general gun violence and others may increase it, but most research does not examine laws' effects on community gun violence specifically

This study focused on *community* gun violence, and there is limited available national research on the effects of gun purchase and possession laws on this type of violence. In addition, limited national research exists on the impacts of gun purchase and possession laws overall because of restrictions on the use of federal funding for this type of research from 1997 to 2020 (sidebar). Additionally, isolating the impact of specific gun laws on *community* gun violence is challenging because of the presence of confounding factors, including other gun laws, the availability and accessibility of guns outside of legal channels, and implementation of gun violence prevention and intervention programs. Because of these confounding factors, there are very few gun laws that have been studied sufficiently to provide conclusive evidence about their effects on *community* gun violence. Consequently, the remainder of this section focuses on what research has found *in general* and is not necessarily applicable to *community* gun violence.

Despite limitations, RAND's extensive systematic review of studies on gun policy impacts has identified three laws that Virginia has which may decrease gun-related homicides and assaults *in general*. RAND concluded that there is *supportive evidence* (sidebar) that child-access prevention (CAP) laws decrease gun-related homicides and assault injuries among young people. Virginia has had a CAP law since 1991 and strengthened the penalty for violating this law in 2020. At least 30 other states and the District of Columbia have CAP laws, but Virginia's is considered one of the more restrictive laws.

RAND also concluded that there is *moderate evidence* that legally required dealer background checks may decrease gun homicides and *limited evidence* that extending background checks for private gun sales (also referred to as "universal background checks") may reduce gun-related homicides. Virginia law has required gun dealers to conduct background checks since 1989; this law was expanded in 2020 to require background checks for private gun sales. As of 2024, 14 states, including Virginia and the District of Columbia, require background checks for dealer and private firearm sales. Virginia's private sales background check requirement was challenged in state circuit court, and a judge issued an injunction stopping implementation of the law in October 2025. Virginia State Police have paused running, or assisting in running, background checks for private gun sales in response to this injunction.

Additionally, RAND found *limited evidence* that legally requiring waiting periods between purchasing and possessing a gun may decrease gun homicides. Virginia, like most other states, does not currently require a waiting period before completing a gun purchase. Eleven states and the District of Columbia require a waiting period for at least some firearm purchases. At least two other states have passed laws requiring waiting periods that are currently on hold because of legal challenges.

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The Dickey Amendment is a provision that has been included in federal appropriations legislation since 1997 that prohibits the use of federal funds to advocate or promote gun control. The provision was interpreted to broadly restrict funding for gun violence research by federal agencies, but in 2018, Congress clarified funds could be used for research on the *causes* of gun violence, and funds were made available in 2020.

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**RAND rated the overall strength of evidence** for the effects of each policy using these categories:

**No studies:** No well-designed studies evaluated the policy's effect on the outcomes of interest.

**Inconclusive evidence:** Comparable well-designed studies identified inconsistent effects.

**Limited evidence:** One well-designed study reported a significant effect of the policy, and comparable studies did not provide contradictory evidence.

**Moderate evidence:** Two or more well-designed studies found significant effects in the same direction, and comparable studies did not provide contradictory evidence. Studies may use the same data set.

**Supportive evidence:** At least three well-designed studies found effects in the same direction, with the effect found in at least two separate and distinct data sets.

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Similarly, Virginia does not have a firearm purchaser license (FPL) law, but such a law was recently studied by the Virginia State Crime Commission. An FPL law requires individuals to obtain a government-issued license before purchasing a firearm, and 14 states and Washington, D.C., have one. RAND found there was *inconclusive* evidence that FPLs affect firearm homicides, which matches the crime commission staff's findings.

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**“May-issue” concealed carry law** allows the issuing authority discretion in whether to grant a license, even if the applicant meets all legal requirements. Under such a law, applicants may be required to show “good cause” or provide character references.

**“Shall-issue” concealed carry law** requires law enforcement to issue a concealed carry permit to any applicant who meets a basic set of criteria (e.g., passing a background check).

**“Permitless” concealed carry law** allows individuals to carry legally owned firearms concealed in public without a permit.

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RAND’s review of gun laws found *supportive evidence* that “stand-your-ground” laws may *increase* firearm homicides. This evidence comes primarily from studies of changes in gun-related homicides after states implemented such a law. As of 2024, 35 other states have some form of “stand-your-ground” law. Virginia does not have a “stand-your-ground” law, but state courts have established case law that individuals have no “duty to retreat” before using self-defense in certain situations, which is functionally similar to stand-your-ground laws. However, given that difference, it is unclear if and how the research findings are applicable to Virginia.

RAND found *supportive evidence* that “shall-issue” and permitless concealed-carry laws may increase gun homicides and other violent crime compared with a more restrictive “may-issue” concealed carry law (sidebar). Research has found, though, that properly permitted gun users are not directly responsible for the increased gun violence associated with concealed carry laws. Prior to the 2022 Supreme Court *Bruen* decision, eight states had “may-issue” concealed carry laws; however, this decision effectively declared “may-issue” permitting laws unconstitutional. As of 2024, 23 states, including Virginia, and the District of Columbia require a permit for concealed carry (“shall-issue”), while 27 states allow permitless concealed carry.

In addition to the laws discussed here, there is some evidence that other laws may decrease other types of gun-related deaths (e.g., domestic violence, suicide), but it is inconclusive on their potential impact on gun homicides and assaults more broadly.

## 2 Effects on Victims, Families, and Community Members

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Community gun violence can affect victims and their families in many ways, depending on the incident and the injuries involved. Incidents commonly occur in public spaces, such as on the street or in a motor vehicle, but they can also happen at victims' homes. For example, police indicated that it is common for assailants to purposefully shoot at residences from the street, or for a bullet from a shooting on the street to pass into a nearby residence. Gun violence incidents can result in the death or injury of the person being targeted or innocent family members and bystanders. For example, a dispute among several young men in a Virginia city park resulted in an exchange of gunfire that killed one child and injured another who was at a picnic nearby.

Community gun violence most directly impacts the victims who are shot and their families, but it can also be traumatizing to targeted individuals who were not injured, witnesses, and other community members. Both fatal and non-fatal shootings can have significant health impacts on victims and their families, including death, a debilitating physical health condition, and mental health trauma. Fatal and non-fatal shootings can also create short- and long-term challenges in the daily lives of victims and families, from the need to relocate to safer housing to temporary or permanent loss of income from lost wages. People who have been shot at or who are otherwise exposed to nearby incidents in their community may also experience negative mental and emotional health impacts even if they are not physically injured or directly involved.

### **Firearm injuries tend to be more lethal, severe, and costly to treat than other assault injuries**

Among the multitude of potential effects of community gun violence, the most direct and greatest impacts are on the physical health of individuals injured by gunshot wounds. Firearm injuries are often fatal but, if not, can still cause severe physical impacts. National estimates indicate that approximately two to three non-fatal firearm injuries occur for every firearm death. These non-fatal injuries vary widely in severity, from minor soft-tissue injuries impacting extremities to serious, complex injuries affecting crucial body systems, such as the head, spinal cord, and vital organs in the abdomen.

### **Compared with other assault injuries, firearm injuries more frequently result in death, and non-fatal injuries tend to be more severe**

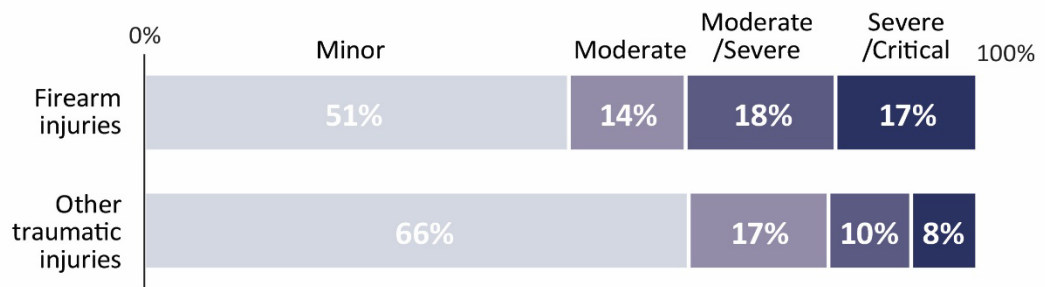
Firearm assault injuries tend to be more lethal than other types of assault injuries, such as stab wounds or blunt force injuries. Research literature has consistently found that firearm assault injuries are associated with higher fatality rates than non-firearm assaults. This research indicates that victims of firearm assault injuries are more likely to

**Hospital case fatality rate** is a measure of the proportion of patients with a specific condition who die while they are in the hospital. In this instance, it is the number of patients who die in the hospital from firearm assault injuries divided by the total number of patients hospitalized for firearm assault injuries.

die before they reach the hospital compared with victims of stab wounds, another common type of assault injury, and they are more likely to die from their injuries even if they reach a hospital for care. One study found a 15 percent hospital case fatality rate (sidebar) for firearm assaults, compared with about a 1 percent fatality rate for stab wounds and a less than 0.1 percent fatality rate for assaults involving blunt objects or bodily force. Subject-matter experts working in Virginia healthcare systems confirmed that firearm assault injuries treated in their hospitals tend to be more lethal than other assault injuries.

Non-fatal firearm injuries are typically more severe than other types of non-fatal injuries. Firearm injuries tend to have higher Injury Severity Scores (ISS) than other penetrating injuries (e.g., stab wounds) and blunt force trauma. National research confirms this: a review of over 10 million traumatic injuries found that firearm injuries were much more likely to be considered “severe/critical” (28 percent) or “moderate/severe” (19 percent) compared with other penetrating injuries (4.7 and 5.9 percent, respectively) and blunt trauma (10 and 11 percent, respectively). National research also indicates firearm injuries tend to be more severe than other types of traumatic injuries, such as motor vehicle crashes. ISS data from Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) Health’s Trauma Center in Richmond supports these national findings. In 2023–24, firearm injuries treated at VCU Health’s Trauma Center were twice as likely to be considered severe as other traumatic injuries (Figure 2-1).

**FIGURE 2-1**  
**Firearm injuries accounted for a disproportionate share of severe injuries at VCU Health’s Trauma Center (2023–24)**



SOURCE: Injury Severity Scores of trauma encounters for patients treated in 2023–24, provided by VCU Health’s Level I Center.

Gunshot wounds are particularly severe and lethal because they have features of both penetrating and blunt force trauma. When a bullet passes through tissue, it creates both a permanent and temporary “cavitation event.” The permanent cavity is the damage inflicted on the tissue the bullet directly contacts (similar to a stab wound). Simultaneously, the shock wave creates a temporary cavity that stretches and damages surrounding tissue (similar to a blunt force injury). Combined, these effects substantially increase the overall severity of injury compared with other penetrating wounds.

## Initial treatment for firearm injuries can be complex and more costly than other injuries

The treatment needs for firearm injuries vary based on severity. Minor firearm injuries, such as graze wounds or other soft tissue injuries, can often be treated in an emergency department, with patients returning home the same day. More severe injuries can require inpatient hospital admission for multiple days, during which the victim may require a variety of procedures including blood transfusions and surgery.

Analysis of Virginia healthcare claims data (sidebar) indicates that more than one-third of individuals who sustain firearm injuries require inpatient hospital admission. Between 2021 and 2024, approximately 39 percent of firearm-injured patients required inpatient care during their first spell of treatment, according to available health insurance claims data. The proportion of firearm-injured patients requiring inpatient care varies across hospitals, based on the hospital's trauma resources and its patient population. For example, in some areas, individuals with severe gunshot injuries are evacuated from local hospitals to the closest Level I trauma center, which can provide a higher level of care. VCU Health's Level I Trauma Center reported that about 80 percent of firearm-injured patients they treat require inpatient admission because of severe injuries. In contrast, Carilion Clinic, which operates both a Level I and a Level III trauma center, estimated only about 40 percent of their firearm injuries required inpatient admission.

Firearm injury patients, on average, require more complex care during inpatient hospital stays than patients with other injuries. They require more resuscitative procedures, blood transfusions, and surgeries to treat their injuries than patients with other penetrating injuries or blunt force trauma. Firearm injuries are also associated with longer intensive care unit (ICU) stays and longer overall hospital stays compared with stab wounds. In interviews, staff at Virginia hospitals reported that their experience aligns with national research. For example, VCU Health's Trauma Center staff reported that 17 percent of their firearm-injured patients required ICU stays in 2023–24, compared with 11 percent of patients with stab wounds.

Firearm injuries are relatively expensive to treat compared with other types of traumatic injuries, primarily because they require more resources and longer hospital stays. Research literature has found that, on average, inpatient treatment costs for firearm injuries are about one-and-a-half to two times the cost of treating stab wounds and about two to three times the cost of treating injuries caused by blunt objects or bodily force. These higher costs are mostly attributable to inpatient admissions for more serious injuries. JLARC analysis of Virginia healthcare claims between 2021 and 2024 found that the average cost of an emergency department-only treatment of firearm injuries was about \$1,900, while the average cost of inpatient treatment was about \$39,000 (sidebar). Inpatient treatment costs ranged widely based on the severity of the injury and were especially high for the top quartile of cases, which ranged from about \$34,600 to over \$232,000.

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**The Virginia All-Payers Claims Database (APCD)** was used to assess healthcare services and costs for firearm injuries. The APCD contains claims data for approximately 60 to 75 percent of the Virginia population, including all Virginia residents with commercial insurance, Medicaid, and Medicare. It does not include individuals covered by federal employee health benefits, military personnel and their family members covered by TRICARE, those with ERISA self-insured coverage, and the uninsured.

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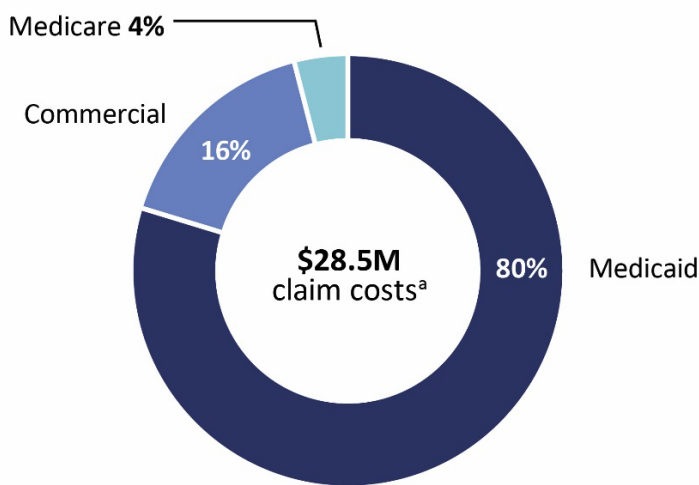
**Treatment costs** in this analysis refer to the actual amount paid by insurers and patients for medical services rendered. Insurance covered approximately 98 percent of the total treatment costs paid across all firearm injury related claims between 2021 and 2024 in this dataset. Treatment costs in this analysis do not include the costs of unreimbursed care absorbed by the hospital or reimbursed through indigent care funding.

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JLARC’s estimates of firearm injuries’ initial treatment costs align with reports from Virginia hospitals and national research. For instance, one Virginia hospital reported that the average inpatient treatment cost for a firearm injury was about \$41,000 between 2022 and 2024. At the same hospital, the average inpatient treatment cost for other traumatic injuries was about \$25,500 over the same period.

Medicaid largely bears the initial treatment costs of firearm injuries, though these costs represent a minimal share of total Medicaid expenditures. Between 2021 and 2023, Medicaid paid approximately 80 percent of the initial treatment costs for firearm injuries among individuals included in Virginia claims data (Figure 2-2). However, the total amount paid to treat these injuries accounted for less than 0.05 percent of total Medicaid claim expenditures for the state over that period. Additional Medicaid funds may be used to compensate hospitals for the costs of treating uninsured individuals with firearm injuries, who are not included in the claims data, but the total impact of these costs, as a proportion of total Medicaid expenditures, is likely very small.

**FIGURE 2-2**  
**Medicaid paid nearly 80 percent of firearm initial treatment costs for patients included in claims data (2021–2023)**



SOURCE: JLARC analysis of Virginia All-Payers Claims Database (APCD) healthcare claims for firearm injury treatment between 2021 and 2023.

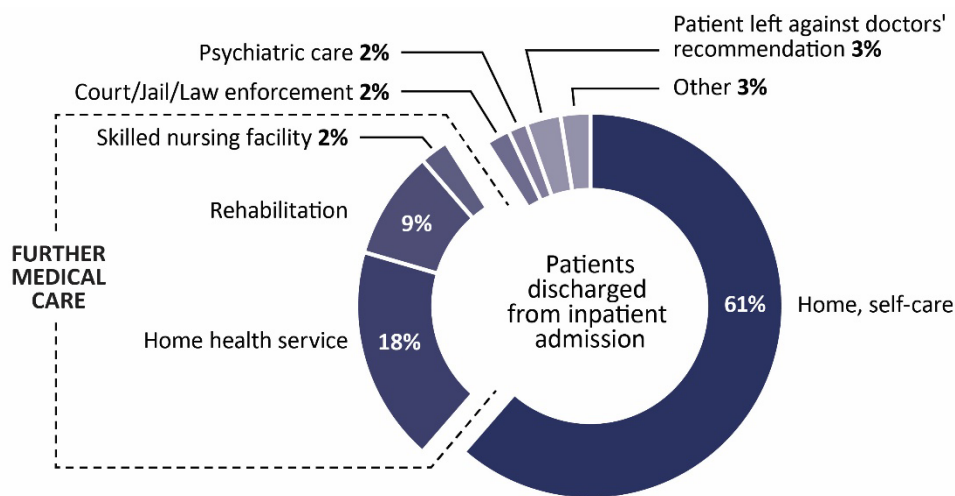
NOTE: <sup>a</sup> The \$28.5 million figure shown here should not be interpreted as the total cost of all care for all Virginia firearm injuries. This figure includes only (1) paid claims costs for treatment incurred by patients included in the APCD claims data, which contains claims data for approximately 60 to 75 percent of the Virginia population, and (2) treatment costs related to diagnosis codes for the initial treatment of the specific injury, including both emergency department and inpatient hospitalization treatment costs. It does not include costs for patients not captured in APCD claims data nor costs related to follow-up or long-term post-discharge care or readmissions to inpatient hospitals that may be related to the original firearm injury under other diagnoses codes. Reliability of hospital ICD-10 coding practices were not evaluated, so it is possible that additional firearm injuries are not captured in the source data set that was used for this analysis. Costs reported here are significantly lower than the total inpatient hospitalization charges reported by the Virginia Department of Health because of differences in the type of data (claim cost versus charge) and data source used.

### Many survivors of firearm injuries require additional care after hospital stays, and some injuries have long-term effects

The long-term healthcare needs of firearm injury survivors can vary based on the severity of their initial injuries. Nationally, and in Virginia, survivors of minor injuries treated solely in the emergency department are typically discharged to their homes with minimal need for further care. For example, they may require only basic wound care or one or two outpatient follow-up appointments. Survivors of more severe injuries, especially injuries that required inpatient hospitalization, may have more extensive healthcare needs following discharge. For example, survivors may need several weeks of ongoing nursing care or long-term rehabilitation to recover motor skills.

In Virginia, approximately 30 percent of firearm injury survivors require some further care after being discharged from the hospital (Figure 2-3). This care may occur in their home from home health care providers or in non-hospital medical facilities like rehabilitation centers or skilled nursing facilities. The percentage of patients who require further care in Virginia aligns with rates reported by VCU Health’s Trauma Center and national rates, according to research literature. Research literature has also found that firearm injury survivors are more likely to require additional care after discharge than survivors of other assault injuries, like stab wounds.

**FIGURE 2-3**  
**Approximately 30 percent of firearm injury survivors admitted to the hospital require further care post discharge (2021–2024)**



SOURCE: JLARC analysis of Virginia All-Payers Claims Database (APCD) healthcare claims for patients admitted to a hospital for firearm injuries between 2021 and 2024.

NOTE: Patients who leave against doctors' recommendations may have been recommended additional care post discharge that they chose to forgo. "Other" includes discharges to other specialty hospitals (e.g., children's hospital, cancer treatment center), transfers from one acute care hospital to another, and discharges to custodial care. Does not include patients who died during their hospital stay.

Many firearm injury survivors have difficulty accessing the follow-up care needed after leaving the hospital, which can impede their recovery. Patients who are uninsured or underinsured face financial barriers to accessing follow-up care, especially costly facility-based services like rehabilitation and skilled nursing. In addition, many firearm injury survivors do not have reliable transportation to visit hospitals or doctors' offices for follow-up care. These patients can also have difficulty getting in-home care because some home health providers will not visit communities that have high levels of gun violence or are otherwise viewed as unsafe. Firearm injury survivors who cannot access needed follow-up medical care have a higher risk of developing medical complications, which further risks poorer long-term health outcomes and higher treatment costs.

In the year following their initial hospitalization, many firearm injury survivors require rehospitalization because of complications from their initial injury, and they tend to use other healthcare services at a higher rate than the general population. Research literature has found that up to 16 percent of firearm injury survivors were readmitted to the hospital at least once within a year because of complications from their initial injury, and that rehospitalization risk for firearm injuries is higher than that of other injuries, such as motor vehicle crashes. Similarly, research literature also indicates that firearm injury survivors visited the emergency department and other medical offices at higher rates and used other medical services (e.g., procedures, imaging, and laboratory testing) more frequently in the year following their injury.

*“ Maybe the victim can no longer walk. Maybe they need a colostomy bag. Maybe they are half blind. Sure, they survived, but now their life is very different once they leave. ”*

**– Hospital staff**

Available research suggests that many firearm injury survivors experience negative long-term health effects. Individuals who sustain more severe firearm injuries (such as brain injuries, spinal cord injuries, or injuries to abdominal organs) often experience functional limitations or physical disabilities that can impact their lives for years. National estimates suggest that these disabling injuries account for about 5 percent of all non-fatal firearm injuries. Victims of less serious firearm injuries may also experience long-term health impacts. Several national studies have found that survivors were more likely to report chronic pain, worse self-reported physical health, functional limitations, and lower likelihood of returning to work than victims of other traumatic injuries.

## **Survivors and others exposed to gun violence often experience negative mental health impacts**

Shootings are violent and traumatizing experiences and can cause or exacerbate a multitude of mental health effects, ranging from diagnosable psychiatric disorders and substance misuse to emotional and behavioral challenges. Survivors of firearm injuries and victims' families are most affected, but friends, neighbors, classmates, and others can also be affected. Residents of some neighborhoods in Virginia's higher gun violence localities are exposed to shootings routinely, which increases their likelihood of experiencing negative mental health effects. Young people growing up in these neighborhoods are especially at risk because their brains are still developing, and research

has found that routine exposure to violence can affect their development and contribute to emotional or behavior concerns.

### **Survivors of firearm injuries are at increased risk for developing mental health conditions and misusing substances**

Firearm injury survivors are at significantly higher risk of experiencing several psychiatric disorders compared with people injured through other non-violent means and the general population. These psychiatric disorders include post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation or attempt, and substance misuse. One robust national study found that psychiatric disorders among firearm injury survivors increased 200 percent compared with control participants in the month after their injury. The literature also indicates that more severe physical injuries tend to have more substantial mental health impacts. In interviews, family members, hospital staff, and other groups that work with survivors in Virginia reported that they frequently witnessed these mental health impacts among those injured.

Some of the mental health impacts from firearm injuries can persist for a year or longer after the original injury. For instance, at one Virginia hospital, 40 percent of patients in a large sample of community gun violence survivors screened positive for PTSD shortly after their injury. At 12 months post injury, nearly 31 percent of these patients continued to demonstrate clinically significant PTSD symptoms. A national study found that through one year of injury, survivors experienced a 51 percent increase in psychiatric disorders and an 85 percent increase in substance misuse compared with control groups.

The psychological impacts of firearm injury may manifest in ways that do not rise to a clinical diagnosis. For example, survivors of firearm injuries may experience feelings of hypervigilance and fear for their safety for years following the incident. This may cause them to engage in behaviors that hinder social and emotional recovery and overall well-being, such as refraining from leaving the house and spending time in public places. Such behaviors can degrade relationships with friends and families.

### **Family members of victims and survivors of firearm injuries may also experience negative mental health impacts after the incident**

Family members of gun violence victims also commonly experience mental health impacts. Parents, other primary caregivers, and other family members of *persons killed* by gun violence often experience severe grief and secondary trauma, which contribute to increased rates of psychiatric disorders. For example, a community worker shared an account of a parent so overwhelmed with grief that they struggled to care for their surviving children and a parent who compulsively re-enacted the moment they learned about their son's death. Another community worker said a mother of a gun-violence victim used to call for support from her car in the middle of the night so that her other children would not see her cry. Siblings of victims also struggle to function after losing their brother or sister, which often manifests in behavioral challenges, according to

“*There is a lot of depression that occurs, especially during the healing period, because they can't get back up and get going. Anxiety is another consequence, where patients are afraid for their life in other situations.*”

— Hospital staff

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“*After the hospital, we did u-turns to check the house and see if anybody was waiting for us...my son always thought someone was running up on us. To this day, he doesn't want to go downtown. He had to move to another jurisdiction. He thinks the city is unsafe because that is where his shooters are.*”

— Mother of firearm injury survivor

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community workers. To cope with the trauma of losing a loved one, research literature has found that family members of gun-violence victims use mental health services and psychiatric medication at higher rates.

“  
*I started drinking like it was a hobby after my son was shot. I had to be strong for him but that was the only thing that helped me sleep.*  
”

– **Mother of firearm injury survivor**

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Parents, other primary caregivers, and other family members of *survivors* of firearm injuries experience similar negative mental health impacts and added financial, physical, and psychological stress associated with serving as a caregiver for their injured family member. For instance, the American College of Surgeons Committee on Trauma estimates 20 to 40 percent of caregivers for patients with trauma injuries experience significant symptoms of depression and PTSD, and another study found that a sample of family members of survivors experienced an 18 percent increase in psychiatric disorders in the month after their family member’s injury compared with the prior month.

Even firearm incidents where no one is injured can have negative mental health impacts on the individuals who were shot at and their family members. These incidents are particularly traumatizing for the individual who was targeted and can contribute to PTSD symptoms and anxiety. Family members of the targeted individual can also develop these mental health conditions, particularly if they were nearby when the incident occurred. Individuals who were nearby but not targeted in a shooting can also be affected by proximity to the incident and the potential for injury or death. Such incidents can be especially impactful if they occur at or near a person’s home because residents no longer feel safe. For example, a community worker reported that a resident was afraid to let their children watch TV in the front room of the house after someone shot into their home, and another reported that they would often sleep in the bathtub when they heard gunshots in the neighborhood.

### **Routine exposure to gun violence can be detrimental to mental health of community residents, especially youth, even if they are not victims**

“  
*Gun violence tears at social cohesion, destroys sense of community and turns people inward... They’re not out, not talking with neighbors, not building or investing in the community. This allows gun violence to continue to grow.*  
”

– **Local health department staff**

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Residents of communities with high gun violence rates are often concerned about the safety of themselves and their loved ones, which can change their behavior and lead to social isolation. Research examining high gun violence communities throughout the country has found that residents in these communities report greater rates of social isolation and loneliness and overall worse quality of life. In Virginia, residents of these communities are reportedly often afraid to let their children play outside, are less likely to walk in the neighborhood, and are less likely to use public spaces (e.g., parks, community centers). Residents’ safety concerns can be particularly strong in days and weeks immediately following a shooting and can cause residents to further withdraw from the community, including temporarily pulling children out of activities like youth sports or even keeping children home from school. When residents withdraw from their communities, it can broadly impact community unity and trust.

Young people in high gun violence communities are especially at risk of negative mental health impacts. Very young children may be exposed to gun violence effects indirectly through toxic stress in the household from parents or caretakers who are afraid

for their own safety and that of their children. Older children and adolescents may witness or hear shootings in their neighborhoods, see victims and crime scenes around their homes, or know neighbors or friends who were injured or killed. For example, school division staff in a higher gun violence locality reported that their students had been exposed to multiple gun violence incidents near school property in recent years, including a homicide crime scene along the route where children frequently walked to and from school.

Exposure to community gun violence puts young people at risk of a spectrum of developmental challenges and clinical mental health disorders. Research has shown that very young children exposed to trauma or toxic stress are more prone to developmental challenges, including difficulties with emotional regulation, cognitive reasoning, and problem solving. For example, research indicates that children exposed to trauma are more likely to have frequent outbursts or slower language development and are predisposed to developing clinical mental health conditions later in life. For older children and adolescents, exposure to gun violence often contributes to or exacerbates the development of PTSD, depression, and anxiety, as well as conduct disorders and behavioral challenges associated with emotional regulation.

These effects have been seen in Virginia's high gun violence communities. For example, staff from one school division reported that students from a neighborhood with particularly high rates of gun violence have been involved in several aggressive bullying incidents. In addition, community workers reported the children they work with are often unable to control their emotions and have violent outbursts while playing games or sports.

Even if a young person does not develop a diagnosable mental health condition from their exposure to gun violence, they can still become desensitized and view it as normal. In interviews, community workers reported the youth they work with are often not afraid when a shooting happens and may even be drawn to it. Research literature suggests that this desensitization can minimize some of the internalized psychological distress of these experiences (e.g., less depression or sadness) but can also lead to apathy about violence and contribute to an increased propensity for aggressive behavior and risk taking. For example, young people who have been repeatedly exposed to gun violence may be more likely to respond to the shooting of a friend with anger and seek retribution.

Young people who are exposed to gun violence are also more likely to carry firearms for protection, which puts them at higher risk of involvement in a violent incident. For instance, one study of children and adolescents in Richmond found that youth who reported higher levels of witnessing violence were more likely to report carrying a handgun. National research indicates that youth who carry guns are more likely to be involved in future gun violence, both as victims and perpetrators. Frequent exposure to gun violence can also contribute to a sense of hopelessness about the future. For example, staff from one community organization said many youth in their community do not think of their future because they do not expect to live past their teenage

“ Sometimes kids are so habituated to gunfire that they're not just desensitized and not responding, but their instinct is to pull out a phone and walk toward it so they can put it on [the internet]. ”

– Community worker

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“ People ask why do these kids have guns? Come live where I live and I bet you buy a gun. They are living in a war zone. ”

– Community worker

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years. The combination of fatalism, increased gun possession, and factors like emotional regulation problems and desensitization to violence perpetuates cycles of gun violence among youth.

### **Individuals impacted by gun violence often do not access mental health services because of limited availability and their lack of confidence in them**

Higher gun violence communities also tend to have shortages in mental health services available. According to subject-matter experts, gun violence survivors experiencing mental health challenges should begin receiving services as soon as possible to address their trauma. However, each of the nine localities with the highest rates of community gun violence in Virginia are designated as mental health professional shortage areas for low income and Medicaid populations, according to the Health Resources and Services Administration. Mental health providers, hospital staff, and staff of other community-based organizations in these communities reported that there is a pronounced shortage of trauma-focused, culturally competent, and youth mental health services in their communities. Mental health providers commonly have waitlists of weeks to months, which can prevent survivors and other impacted individuals from quickly accessing the services they need.

“*It’s not that they aren’t taking our clients, but folks aren’t necessarily engaging. It goes back to a lack of trust, but there is also a significant amount of social stigma that hangs over the community and plays a role in the engagement...it is difficult to get people to engage for any length of time beyond just an intake appointment.*”

– Community worker

Even when mental health services are available in the community, survivors, their family members, and others exposed to gun violence may not take full advantage of them. Mental health providers, hospital staff, and staff of other community-based organizations reported that many people who experience gun violence do not prioritize mental health, believe in the value of therapy, or believe that the services would benefit them. One survivor of a serious firearm injury told the JLARC team that they did not pursue mental health therapy because they did not think anyone could understand what they had been through. In addition, some survivors and family members do not trust the healthcare system more broadly. Even if they want to address their mental health, logistical challenges such as transportation and pressing daily needs (e.g., work, caring for a family member) can be barriers to accessing mental health services. Many of those needing services are not receiving them for these various reasons, resulting in the trauma they have experienced from gun violence going unaddressed.

### **Survivors and families often have additional near- and long-term needs beyond health care**

Healthcare is often the most pressing need facing victims and their families in the aftermath of violent incidents, but experiencing community gun violence can also be disruptive to other aspects of their lives. Many victims of community violence are from low-income communities and have limited financial savings; transportation access; and housing, employment, and schooling options. Within the Virginia communities with the highest rates of gun violence, about 35 percent of people live below the

poverty line, on average, and the median annual household income is \$36,350. Experiencing gun violence can be particularly disruptive to the lives of these lower-income individuals.

### **In the aftermath of gun violence, survivors and families often require relocation to ensure safety and accessibility**

Survivors of gun violence and their families frequently require assistance relocating temporarily or permanently following violent incidents. If the shooting happened at or outside a home, relocation may be required for several reasons. The home may have been damaged or still be an active crime scene, surviving family members may feel unsafe returning, or the incident resulted in eviction because it was considered a lease violation. Even if the incident took place elsewhere, survivors and families may not feel safe returning home because they fear the people who shot them may know where they live and return to “finish the job,” according to community workers. In addition, survivors often cannot return home because of their injuries. For example, a survivor interviewed for this study reported that they previously lived in a walk-up apartment but had to move because they are now in a wheelchair.

“*If a resident is shot or assaulted, the family will sometimes be evicted and have to find a new place to live in 30 days. We have helped provide moving services and paying for expenses. This is a common clause in leases.*”

– Community worker

When temporary relocation is needed, survivors and families often require assistance finding a hotel or other temporary housing for several days to weeks and may need financial assistance for the unexpected expense. Other survivors and families who need to relocate long term or permanently may require help finding new permanent housing and more substantial financial assistance. According to staff of community-based organizations, some survivors and families may need to leave the locality, or even the state, to find safe, affordable housing. These survivors and families frequently require financial assistance for moving expenses and new housing costs, like security deposits or higher rents.

### **Survivors and families frequently face substantial financial challenges following gun violence**

Victims and families of community gun violence are often from low-income households, and the impacts of gun violence can be devastating financially. Households can lose their main source of income if the victim was the primary income earner for the household, or families may be unable to work because they are either bedside at the hospital or helping care for a survivor after discharge. Federal data estimates non-fatal firearm assault injuries cause an average annual loss of work-related income of \$9,673, which represents about 25 percent of the *median* annual household income of the state’s highest gun violence communities. Losing such a substantial amount of income can be devastating for low-income families in the short term, especially if they have no or few savings to support them.

Over the long term, loss of future employment and educational opportunities for individuals who are fatally or severely injured can place a tremendous financial burden on victims and families. Victims who are killed are no longer around to help financially

“  
*I was in the military and taking college classes. I was all the way out. [My injury] set me all the way back, like to when I was a teen.*

”  
– Gun violence survivor

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support families, partners, or children. One study estimated the lifetime work loss cost of homicide as \$1.4 million per individual. Survivors with severe injuries may be unable to perform the same work they previously performed or pursue education opportunities because of physical or mental incapacitation and would also experience large work loss costs over their lifetimes.

In addition to financial help, survivors and families also frequently require assistance with other basic needs following the violent incident. Staff of community-based organizations report that survivors and families typically need help with transportation, child care, meals, or other basic needs while they take time off work to be with recuperating family members. Healthcare staff also reported that many families need help navigating the medical system, including applying for insurance and setting up follow-up appointments for their injured family members. Families of victims in fatal incidents may need assistance planning and paying for the funeral of their lost loved one.

# 3 Effects on Local Economies and Government Institutions

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Community gun violence can have major impacts on local economies. Gun violence creates or exacerbates perceptions that a neighborhood or an entire locality is unsafe, depressing business activity, commercial and residential growth, and property values. Because community gun violence is typically concentrated in a few neighborhoods, economic impacts are borne disproportionately by those communities. High-violence areas—both in Virginia and nationally—often coincide with neighborhoods that have high poverty rates, adding an additional layer of hardship to these communities.

Community gun violence also puts additional stress on local government institutions, especially the police departments and schools in higher gun violence localities. Increased calls for service to police because of gun violence divert officers from other law enforcement priorities and can strain already understaffed law enforcement agencies. School divisions invest more resources into ensuring the safety of students and staff while they are on school property and supporting the emotional and mental health needs of students and staff who have been exposed to gun violence. Although not a focus of this report, community gun violence also strains other government entities, such as the court and corrections systems, as they handle cases and hold offenders accountable.

## **Gun violence negatively affects local economies, including business activity and property values**

Localities need strong economies to support vibrant communities, provide a high quality of life, and attract residents, employers, and visitors. Localities also need healthy economies to generate sufficient tax revenues to support local government services, such as education, law enforcement, and social services. Weak local economies have several negative impacts, including insufficient employment opportunities, poverty, population loss, falling property values, and less tax revenue for governments (while service needs increase).

Keeping violent crime low helps maintain a strong economy. A growing body of research literature has found that violent crime—and gun violence in particular—depresses business activity and property values. In interviews for this study, Virginia business owners and associations in the state’s higher gun violence localities expressed similar experiences and concerns.

## **Violent crime, particularly gun violence, negatively affects businesses**

Businesses that rely on walk-in customer traffic—such as retail stores, bars and restaurants, and arts and entertainment venues—are most likely to be affected by gun

violence because customers are less likely to go to areas seen as unsafe. Commercial leasing, such as office space, can also be affected by gun violence because tenants do not want to work in areas considered unsafe. In interviews, businesses in Virginia’s higher gun violence localities were much more concerned with violent crime like shootings, than property crime like theft, for safety reasons and because of the larger impacts those crimes have on business activity.

“*Staff don’t want to work in a hostile environment, and customers don’t want to dine in it either. We used to stay open late (midnight) and now close early (9 pm) as a result.*”

“*We close early explicitly to keep staff and customers safe. We don’t want to be on the news for having a customer shot on the patio.*”

– Restaurant owners

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Shootings—and violent crime in general—negatively affect businesses, leading to a short-term drop in business activity as customers perceive the area as unsafe. Research has found this effect in areas with both high- and low-baseline crime levels, and Virginia business owners found these impacts were especially pronounced following high-profile incidents receiving significant media coverage. This drop in customers temporarily reduces businesses’ revenue, especially those relying on nighttime visits. For example, one study found there was a 1 percent reduction in customer visits for each nearby street crime in the previous month and a 3 percent drop in night popularity. Bar and restaurant owners in several of Virginia’s higher gun violence localities reported closing early because they see little traffic later in the evening and are concerned about customer and employee safety.

Over the longer term, areas with persistently higher levels of shootings and violent crime can experience a lasting reduction in business activity. Several studies have found an increase in gunshots or violent crime were associated with fewer new businesses being established and downsizing or loss of existing businesses in the areas around where incidents occurred. Alongside other factors, business owners may consider local crime in their location and expansion decisions. For example, several Virginia business owners said crime near their businesses prevented them from investing more in them.

Gun violence risk also makes business operations more challenging and expensive. Businesses in higher crime areas incur additional costs for security measures like lighting, camera systems, staff training (e.g., de-escalation, emergency response), and security guards to prevent or respond to violent crime. Businesses also incur additional costs from property damage and pay higher insurance premiums. For example, three Virginia business owners interviewed reported they had replaced windows that had been damaged by nearby shootings. Business owners and employees also have added stress or anxiety, especially when an incident occurs, and face staff recruitment and retention challenges. For example, some business owners said some of their staff have left after nearby incidents, and others said recruitment was difficult because of concerns about crime in the area.

“*Although the shooting issues happen late at night, it still affects the overall perception of downtown being ‘rough,’ even for people who might only come during the day. Now the perception is downtown is full of shootings and crime and so it’s not worth coming.*”

– Downtown business owner

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Although most gun violence occurs in and around residential neighborhoods, shootings sometimes occur in downtown commercial and entertainment districts, often late at night. While these districts are generally safe, shootings in these areas are typically higher profile and contribute to a perception that the district (or even the whole locality) is unsafe. This perception is difficult to change and can drive down business over the long term. Thriving downtowns attract residents and employers to the area and drive consumer spending in the locality, so negative perceptions of downtown districts

are harmful for local economies. Business associations for two different regions said a major challenge in attracting large employers to their regions is that their cities and downtowns are perceived as high crime areas. Business owners and associations in higher gun violence localities reported that downtown business activity has not recovered to pre-COVID levels, and crime appears to be a major contributing factor. Business owners were concerned that, if unaddressed, gun violence could lead to empty commercial districts, with decreased foot traffic, increased vacant buildings, and no new development.

### **Violent crime, including shootings, is associated with reduced residential and commercial real estate values**

Property values are vitally important for Virginia's local governments, who rely on real estate property taxes for 50 percent of their revenue, on average. Several studies have found that surges or higher levels of gunfire or violent crime depress property values. For example, one study found that a 10 percent increase in violent crimes in a neighborhood reduced housing values by as much as 6 percent, and another study found that each day with a nearby gunfire incident reduced sales prices by 9.6 percent. Another study found high levels of violent crime in a neighborhood led to depressed home values because of residents moving out of the neighborhood.

Commercial property values can also be affected by nearby violent crime, making it more difficult to fully lease spaces and depressing market lease rates. One study found that a single violent crime incident reduced commercial property sale prices by 1 to 6 percent, depending on its proximity to the crime. During interviews, downtown business owners and developers in Virginia's higher gun violence localities said violence seemed to be preventing new development and causing building owners to not maintain their properties, contributing to a cycle of depressed property values. Downtown business owners in one higher gun violence locality said a nearby commercial property remained on the market for years despite being in a prime location.

### **Increased gun violence can strain already short-staffed law enforcement agencies**

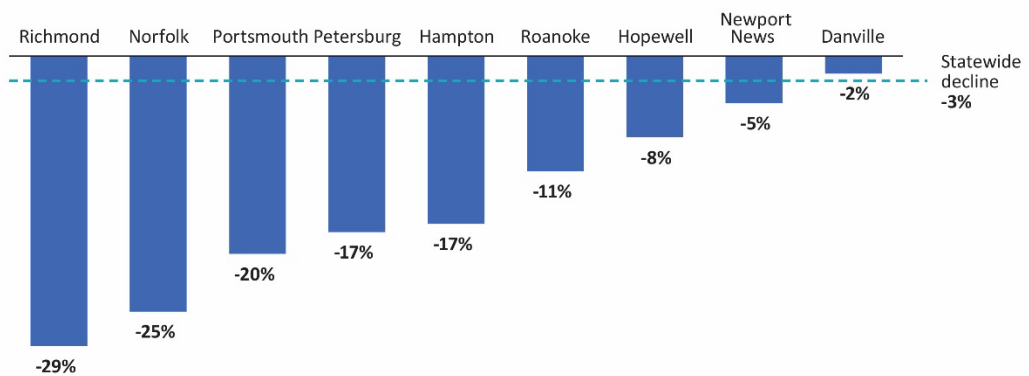
High levels of gun violence strain local law enforcement, affecting their operational capacity, particularly during officer shortages. As the local entity primarily responsible for preventing, responding to, and investigating incidents, increases in gun-related violent crimes like homicides and assaults divert limited law enforcement resources from lower-crime areas and other investigations. Responding to these incidents can require more personnel (e.g., securing a perimeter) and longer times to clear crime scenes. Investigating and prosecuting gun violence incidents is also personnel- and time-intensive. In response to these challenges, departments have adopted new patrolling strategies, staffing approaches, and technologies (Chapter 4).

### Staffing at police departments in higher gun violence localities has not fully recovered from impacts of the pandemic and negative public sentiment

The statewide decline in full-time law enforcement officers was attributable to declines in urban departments (-10 percent), as suburban and rural departments experienced an increase in full-time officers during this time (1 percent and 6 percent, respectively).

Many police departments experienced high turnover during the COVID-19 pandemic, and turnover was especially high in some of the higher gun violence localities. Statewide, the number of full-time law enforcement officers declined about 3 percent from 2020 to 2022 (sidebar). However, departments in several higher gun violence localities had much larger declines, including Richmond, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Hampton, Petersburg, and Roanoke (Figure 3-1). Several factors contributed to turnover during this period, including increased stress and burnout from the challenges of working during the pandemic, as well as a national anti-law enforcement sentiment following several highly publicized deaths and subsequent protests.

**FIGURE 3-1**  
Several higher gun violence localities experienced large declines in full-time law enforcement officers during the COVID-19 pandemic

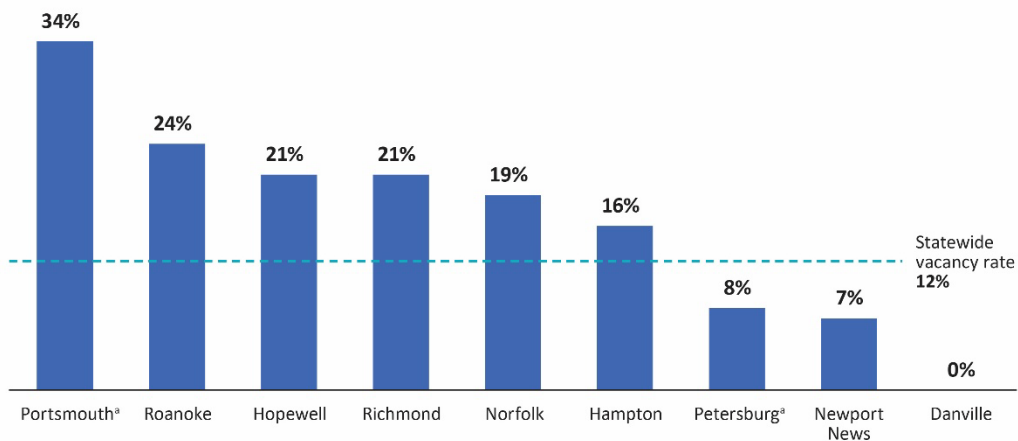


SOURCE: Virginia State Police locality data on sworn full-time law enforcement officers, 2020 to 2022.

Most police chiefs in higher gun violence localities reported that community gun violence does not significantly affect their ability to recruit and retain law enforcement officers. Rather, many of these chiefs stated that officers tend to be attracted to their departments because they want more intense police work.

Although police department staffing has rebounded to some extent, vacancies in several departments in higher gun violence localities still exceed the statewide vacancy rate. In 2024, the average vacancy rate for full-time officers was about 16 percent in localities with higher rates of gun violence compared with 12 percent statewide. Several localities had vacancy rates over 20 percent, including Hopewell, Portsmouth, Richmond, and Roanoke (Figure 3-2).

**FIGURE 3-2**  
**Police departments in several higher gun violence localities still have above-average vacancy rates following the pandemic (2024)**



SOURCE: Virginia State Police locality data on sworn full-time law enforcement officers, 2024.

NOTE: <sup>a</sup> Portsmouth and Petersburg vacancy data for 2023, as 2024 data was not available.

### Responding to gun violence incidents can strain limited law enforcement resources, particularly for patrol and investigations

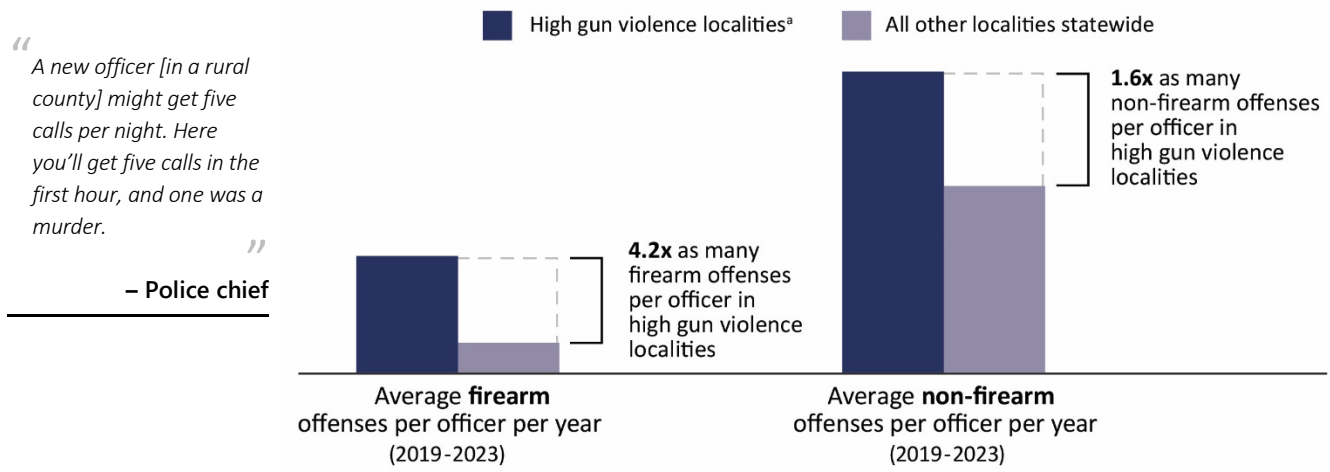
Responding to community gun violence strains law enforcement resources, particularly in departments facing staffing shortages, and exacerbates workload for remaining officers. According to police chiefs, the workload can be especially strenuous for patrol and investigations. Law enforcement agencies may need to increase patrols in certain areas after a shooting, such as a neighborhood hot spot where retaliation is expected, which leaves fewer officers available to patrol other areas. The pandemic-related staffing shortages also created investigations backlogs. Departments were sometimes unable to investigate non-injury firearm incidents or could not start investigations until months after the incident occurred, reducing the likelihood of solving them and preventing additional incidents. However, police chiefs indicated investigation backlogs have improved as staffing rebounded after the pandemic.

Police departments in localities with higher gun violence rates generally have a higher per-officer workload than the statewide average. Considering the total number of firearm-related offenses from 2019–2023, higher gun violence localities had more than four times the average rate of offenses per full-time officer per year than other localities statewide. Higher gun violence localities also had a higher rate of non-firearm offenses per full-time officer per year than the average across other localities statewide (Figure 3-3).

“ It is a compounding effect when short-staffed. You are running just barely meeting calls for service. The pressure of that being short-staffed and feeling like officers are constantly running to calls but also tasked to areas with gun violence...it’s very hard to keep your head above water.

– Police chief

**FIGURE 3-3**  
**Localities with high rates of gun violence have a higher law enforcement workload relative to the statewide average**



SOURCE: Virginia State Police full-time law enforcement officers and criminal offense data by locality (2019–2023).  
 NOTE: Excludes traffic violations, which are not criminal offenses. <sup>a</sup> Higher gun violence localities include Danville, Hampton, Hopewell, Newport News, Norfolk, Petersburg, Portsmouth, Richmond, and Roanoke. For additional information on how higher gun violence localities were determined, see Appendix B.

In addition to having a greater workload, the rate of firearm-related incidents per officer in higher gun violence localities has also been increasing. For example, in comparing the five-year time periods from 2009–2013 to 2019–2023, the rate of firearm offenses per full-time officer increased an average of 79 percent across higher gun violence localities. This likely reflects the combination of increased community gun violence and higher officer turnover during the pandemic, highlighting the challenge of law enforcement responding to more incidents with fewer officers available.

**Law enforcement officer injuries from gun violence are rare, but responding to these incidents can negatively affect officer mental health**

Although law enforcement is a dangerous occupation, officer involvement or injuries from gun violence make up a very small portion of firearm-related incidents. Over the past 15 years (2010–2024), law enforcement officers were identified as victims in less than 1 percent of all firearm-related incidents statewide. When officers are victims in these instances, they are rarely injured (e.g., was shot at, but not hit). Over the past five years on average (2020–2024), 87 percent of officers identified as the victim of a firearm-related incident statewide were uninjured, 6 percent sustained minor injuries (e.g., minor wounds, scrapes, or bruises that required little to no first aid), 6 percent sustained major injuries (e.g., more significant injuries that require medical attention, such as a graze wound), and 1 percent were fatally injured.

Law enforcement officers regularly respond to crime scenes, accidents, and other traumatic incidents—including community gun violence—and research literature suggests this can negatively impact officer mental health. Sixty-eight percent of law enforcement officers in Virginia reported stress in their professional life because of “responding to critical incidents,” according to a 2022 National Wellness Survey for Public Safety Personnel conducted by the U.S. Marshals Service. Additionally, 31 percent of respondents reported being formally diagnosed with a depressive disorder, and 26 percent reported being formally diagnosed with an anxiety disorder (compared with 6 percent and 4 percent in the general population, respectively). During interviews with JLARC staff, police department leadership reinforced that responding to traumatic incidents can put a strain on officer mental health. Police departments currently provide a variety of resources to support officer well-being, such as annual mental health evaluations and peer support programs.

“ There are a lot of trauma-related events that build up as a pressure cooker. As a captain, I went to 88 homicide events in four years. That builds up. ”

– Police department leadership

## Community gun violence creates additional challenges for school divisions

Although the risk of gun violence taking place in schools is a significant concern, this study focused on how schools are affected by gun violence in the broader community. Shootings within a school or on a school property are rare. From 2003–2022, there were seven fatal shootings on a Virginia K–12 school property, which was less than 0.01 percent of fatal shootings statewide. State data indicates that none of the victims in these incidents were students. Several nonfatal shootings have occurred on school property, such as the shooting of an elementary school teacher in Newport News in 2023, but these incidents are also infrequent. State data on nonfatal school shootings is limited, but available information indicates shootings on school property typically do not involve students or staff and occur outside of school hours.

Public schools serving communities with higher levels of gun violence face distinct and complex challenges. Students at these schools may be afraid for their safety, traumatized by gun violence, or even be victims themselves, which negatively affects their behavior and well-being. School divisions in these communities also have heightened security concerns. Divisions in higher gun violence localities generally fare worse than other divisions in the state across several key indicators (Table 3-1). Mitigating these challenges requires divisions to invest in both additional safety and security measures and services to support the well-being of both students and staff.

While school divisions in higher gun violence localities generally fare worse on these metrics, gun violence is not the sole cause. Communities with high rates of gun violence typically are high poverty areas, meaning these school divisions serve student populations with greater socioeconomic adversity. For example, 99 percent of students in higher gun violence localities were eligible for free or reduced lunch in 2024–25 (compared with 55 percent across all other divisions statewide). Because poverty also contributes to many of the same issues—including poor student attendance, behavior,

and academic outcomes—gun violence is an additional contributing factor to the challenges these school divisions already face.

**TABLE 3-1**  
**School divisions in higher gun violence localities generally fare worse on several key indicators than other school divisions**

	Higher gun violence localities <sup>a</sup> (average)	Higher gun violence localities (range)	All other localities statewide (average)
<b>VDOE metrics</b>			
Chronic absenteeism	26%	16%–40%	21%
Student behavioral incidents	54 per 100 students	30–84 per 100 students	37 per 100 students
Teacher vacancy rate	8%	3%–17%	3%
Aide and paraprofessional vacancy rate	15%	4%–40%	4%
<b>DCJS high school teacher survey responses</b>			
Teachers strongly disagreeing that students come to school ready to learn	17%	11%–24%	7%
Teachers reporting they do not feel safe at their school	27%	18%–45%	13%
Teachers reporting that a student has threatened to harm them	26%	16%–34%	13%

SOURCE: JLARC staff analysis of Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) chronic absenteeism data, student behavior data, and teacher and staff vacancy data. JLARC staff analysis of Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) School Survey of Climate and Working Conditions.

NOTE: VDOE chronic absenteeism and student behavioral incidents include average rates from 2021–22 to 2023–24. Teacher and staff vacancy rates are averages from 2021–22 to 2024–25. DCJS data from 2024 survey of high school teachers. <sup>a</sup> Higher gun violence localities include Danville, Hampton, Hopewell, Newport News, Norfolk, Petersburg, Portsmouth, Richmond, and Roanoke. For additional information on how higher gun violence localities were determined, see Appendix B.

### Community gun violence negatively affects student attendance and classroom engagement

Gun violence in the broader community can make students fearful to come to school. Research literature and interviews with school divisions and other community stakeholders indicate that students in higher gun violence localities may be afraid to come to school if (1) there are other students threatening them with violence; or (2) they must walk to school through neighborhoods where they feel unsafe. A 2024 survey conducted by the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS, sidebar), found high school students in the nine Virginia localities with higher rates of community gun violence were more likely than the statewide average to report they:

- do not feel safe traveling between their home and school (13 percent average vs. 6 percent in all other divisions);
- do not feel safe outside on school grounds (17 percent average vs. 7 percent in all other divisions); and

**DCJS conducts a School Survey of Climate and Working Conditions**, which measures student, teacher, and staff perceptions of various indicators of school climate and safety. The survey is a required component of school safety audits that divisions must submit annually to DCJS, pursuant to § 22.1-279.8.B of the Code of Virginia.

- do not feel safe in school hallways and bathrooms (25 percent average vs. 17 percent in all other divisions).

Student fears of gun violence can reduce their school attendance, and school divisions in localities with high rates of community gun violence typically have higher chronic absenteeism rates than the statewide average. The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) defines chronic absenteeism as the proportion of students missing 10 percent or more of the academic year for any reason. Most school divisions in higher gun violence localities had chronic absenteeism rates that were higher than the average of 21 percent across other localities statewide (for 2021–22 to 2023–24), with the highest rates in Hopewell (31 percent) and Petersburg (40 percent) (sidebar).

Students who have been exposed to community gun violence also have difficulty engaging in classroom instruction. School division staff reported that these students often struggle to process the trauma that they have experienced, which affects their attention and participation in the classroom. On the 2024 DCJS survey, high school teachers in Virginia’s higher gun violence localities were more likely to strongly disagree that “students come to school ready to learn,” relative to the statewide average (17 percent average across higher gun violence localities vs. 7 percent in all other divisions).

Students who have been exposed to community gun violence may also exhibit more inappropriate or disorderly behavior at school. Division staff in higher gun violence localities reported that exposure to gun violence and the associated trauma can cause students to be more disruptive in class. According to VDOE data, school divisions in higher gun violence localities had an average of 54 reported behavioral incidents annually per 100 students, compared with an average of 37 incidents per 100 students across all other divisions statewide (for 2021–22 to 2023–24). Additionally, in high gun violence areas, a higher proportion of these incidents were considered “behaviors of a safety concern,” including physical fights with other students.

When students are unable to either focus in class or attend class regularly, academic performance will suffer. Research literature indicates that exposure to gun violence or other community violence can contribute to lower test scores, increased grade level repetition, and decreased high school graduation rates. Research has also found that education protects against violence. For example, one study found that high early educational achievement is associated with lower youth homicide rates, suggesting educational achievement reduces homicide risk for youth.

### **Community gun violence places additional stress on teachers and staff and has reportedly exacerbated recruitment and retention challenges**

Teachers and other school staff face increased workload and emotional strain while teaching and supporting students impacted by gun violence. School division staff in higher gun violence localities reported in interviews that teaching and supporting

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**Chronic absenteeism has declined** to some extent from its peak during the pandemic in 2021–22, in both higher gun violence localities (-7 percent) as well as other localities statewide (-7 percent).

**Chronic absenteeism differs from truancy** and is defined as students having six or more unexcused absences per academic year. If a student is found to be truant, the division is required to meet with the student and their parents to resolve issues related to the student’s lack of attendance, which may include referring the student to juvenile and domestic relations district court.

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“ We have students struggling with behavior because of the trauma; they can’t control their bodies. Their parent may have been taken to jail or arrested in front of them. Students are sometimes not ready to learn when they come in. That impacts students, teachers, and administrators. ”

– School division staff

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“  
*A murder in one of our apartment complexes could easily have 100 of our students living there. A school counselor can easily be overwhelmed by that.*  
 ”

– School division staff

students impacted by gun violence is especially challenging in the immediate aftermath of an incident. Teachers and staff may also be personally affected if one of their own students, or a student who they know well, is injured or killed in community gun violence.

Teachers and staff in these communities also fear violence at school, including non-gun-related violence like student fights. For example, staff members in one school division were concerned when a public housing closure relocated students across the city to another school, mixing them with students from a rival, high gun violence neighborhood and raising the threat of violence. The threat of violence in school puts teachers at risk, either by students behaving violently toward them or by being injured while attempting to intervene in a student fight. On the 2024 DCJS survey, high school teachers in higher gun violence localities were more likely to report that they do not feel safe in their school (27 percent average across higher gun violence localities vs. 13 percent in all other divisions), or that they have had a student threaten to harm them (26 percent average across higher gun violence localities vs. 13 percent in all other divisions).

The threat of violence, coupled with the extra workload and emotional strain of working with traumatized students, can worsen recruitment and retention challenges for school divisions in higher gun violence localities. Research indicates that teachers are less likely to seek jobs in schools located in neighborhoods with high violent crime rates. These same factors also make it more difficult for divisions to keep existing teachers and staff. Some divisions in higher gun violence localities have teacher and staff vacancy rates that are higher than the statewide average. For example, the average teacher vacancy rate from 2021–22 to 2024–25 was 3 percent across all other localities statewide, compared with 8 percent in higher gun violence localities. Several of these divisions had average teacher vacancy rates as high as 15 percent. Similar trends persist for aides and paraprofessionals, as well as non-instructional personnel.

### **School divisions have invested resources in security infrastructure and staffing in response to community gun violence**

Community gun violence increases the need for building infrastructure upgrades to enhance school safety. School divisions in higher gun violence localities have invested in several upgrades to improve building security, including metal detectors and other weapons detection systems; high resolution camera systems; IT systems to screen visitors; double-locking doors; and panic button systems for teachers in classrooms. Although school divisions across the state may use these security measures to some extent, building security is of special priority to divisions in higher gun violence localities.

In addition to building infrastructure, school divisions in higher gun violence localities also need more security personnel than other divisions in the state. School divisions rely on both school resource officers (SROs) and school security officers (SSOs) for building safety (sidebar). Divisions report that the need for these security staff is driven largely by the violence in the surrounding neighborhood. For example, one division

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**SROs are sworn officers** employed by the police department or sheriff's office who are assigned to the school to assist with matters related to safety, security, and the law. SROs are typically armed.

**SSOs are employed (or contracted)** by the school division to enforce the school's Code of Conduct. All SSOs must complete certified training by DCJS, including on topics such as relevant state and federal laws; security awareness in a school environment; and mediation and conflict resolution. SSOs are typically unarmed.

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reported that its high school with the fewest students had the most SSOs because of the high threat of violence within the school and surrounding area. In 2024, the nine school divisions in localities with the highest rates of community gun violence had an average of 3.2 SROs/SSOs per 1,000 students (compared with 2.0 across other divisions statewide). These nine divisions account for about 16 percent of SROs/SSOs statewide, despite having only 11 percent of students in the state.

Divisions in localities with higher gun violence rates typically rely more heavily on SSOs than SROs because law enforcement agencies are understaffed and cannot assign additional officers to the school division. SROs are sworn officers provided by the local police department or sheriff's office (funded through a combination of school division funds, law enforcement funds, and DCJS grants). School divisions interviewed reported they must hire SSOs when local law enforcement agencies cannot dedicate enough SROs to meet the division's security needs. In 2024, school divisions in Virginia's nine higher gun violence localities had more than twice as many SSOs per student compared with other divisions statewide. SSO positions are funded solely by school divisions in four of the nine higher gun violence localities. SSOs are typically more expensive for school divisions than sharing an SRO position with the local law enforcement agency; however, some of these costs can be offset by DCJS grant funding.

State-funded grants have helped offset some of school divisions' security costs. For example, school divisions may receive up to \$250,000 each fiscal year through VDOE's security equipment grants. DCJS also has an SRO/SSO grant program, which provides funding to divisions to put either an SRO or an SSO in schools that do not have any. The program provides grants of up to \$100,000 per SRO position and \$50,000 per SSO position. Both programs have a local match requirement.

### **School divisions invest additional resources in services to support the well-being of students and staff**

To encourage student attendance and ensure safe travel to and from school, school divisions partner with community-based organizations to operate "safe passage" programs. These initiatives place trained volunteers at bus stops and along walking routes before and after school to escort students through neighborhoods and discourage violence and other criminal activity when students are walking to and from school. By mitigating safety risks, safe passage programs reduce student fear and help encourage them to attend school regularly. Several higher gun violence localities utilize safe passage programs, including Norfolk and Portsmouth.

Once students are at school, division staff provide additional academic and support services to help address the impacts of community gun violence on students. During interviews, division staff reported providing wraparound services to students depending on individual needs. If a student's needed services are unavailable from school staff, schools refer them to external mental and behavioral health services (such as through the community services board, sidebar). Academically, school divisions

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**School divisions may be unable to provide services** directly to students because of mental health staff shortages. For example, the statewide vacancy rate for school psychologists was 8 percent during the 2024–25 school year.

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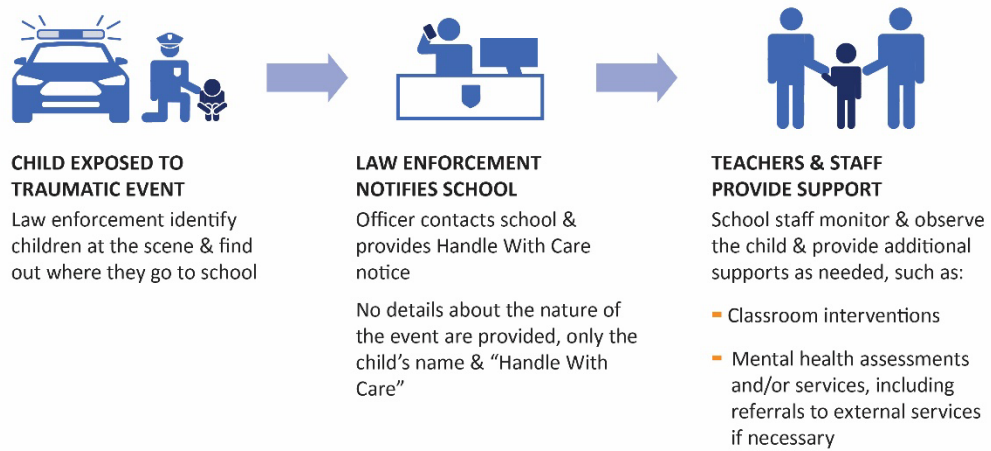
**The Handle with Care program is run by DCJS,** which provides training at no cost to law enforcement, school divisions, and mental health partners interested in standing up the program in their locality. Higher gun violence localities that currently participate include Hopewell, Newport News, Norfolk, and Petersburg.

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reported providing additional tutoring to students impacted by gun violence, either during the day or after school, or enrolling them in remedial summer programs as needed.

Several school divisions in localities with higher rates of gun violence also participate in “Handle with Care.” Handle with Care is a trauma-informed communication system between schools and law enforcement to help ensure students affected by traumatic events—including both gun violence and other traumatic incidents like domestic violence—receive the support they need from division staff (sidebar, Figure 3-4). The Handle with Care Program originated in West Virginia and is used in several other states, including Florida, Indiana, Maryland, Michigan, Ohio, and Texas. According to DCJS data, 47 Virginia school divisions currently participate in Handle with Care, and 40 more divisions plan to implement it in the future.

**FIGURE 3-4**  
**Handle with Care helps direct additional supports to students who have been exposed to community gun violence or another traumatic event**



SOURCE: DCJS Handle with Care website.

School divisions also address the impacts of community gun violence on teachers and staff through both formal and informal support. Formal measures include employee counseling programs; hotlines for reporting concerns to division administration; and training on de-escalation and recognizing potential signs of violence among students. Informally, division staff also reported supporting teachers following an incident in the community. For example, division administrators may take over classrooms to give teachers time to decompress and process their emotions.

# 4 Addressing Community Gun Violence

Reducing community gun violence and addressing its effects require more than effective law enforcement and prosecution. Law enforcement strategies have traditionally focused on deterring violence, but deterrence strategies are of limited effectiveness on their own, because many acts of violence, especially those committed by young people, are carried out impulsively without regard to consequences. According to national gun violence reduction models and research literature, in addition to law enforcement strategies, localities need programs that are designed to prevent and intervene in violence and that respond to the needs of affected community members in the aftermath of violent incidents (Figure 4-1). These programs should be implemented by city departments and community-based organizations (CBOs) and complement law enforcement efforts. When implemented properly, these types of programs have been found to effectively reduce gun violence and promote positive outcomes.

“ There are many, many reasons why crime happens and the police can’t address all of them. Our role is to be police. Crime is the whole city’s problem to solve. We have to get everyone at the table, and everyone has to be responsible for eating a piece of the pie. ”

– Virginia police chief

**FIGURE 4-1**  
Strategy to effectively address gun violence and its effects should have four key components



SOURCE: JLARC staff analysis.

NOTE: This framework combines elements of three national models: (1) the Public Health model for violence prevention, which adopts the approach used to address other public health crises and includes primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of “prevention,” which roughly correspond to what this report classifies as prevention, intervention and response, (2) the Focused Deterrence model, and (3) the Comprehensive Gang model. The latter two models focus more on law enforcement approaches but also include some elements this report classifies as intervention.

This chapter describes programs for addressing gun violence that national research has found to be effective when properly implemented. Virginia’s higher gun violence

localities have begun to implement many of these promising programs and strategies, and the chapter includes examples from several localities. However, for these local efforts to yield meaningful impacts on gun violence and its effects, they must be implemented effectively. JLARC staff interviews with program leads indicate that many individual programs are using evidence-based designs, appear to be effectively implemented, and are likely achieving positive outcomes. However, not all programs have performance measures in place, and many are still in the early stages of implementation. Overall, key data indicators like homicides show that community gun violence is decreasing at the local level, and the decrease in gun violence has corresponded to an increase in local programs and efforts. While this suggests local programs are having a positive effect, additional data collection is needed to firmly link local efforts to these reductions. Furthermore, while a locality may have one or several of the programs, these programs are generally not yet operating at a scale that matches the magnitude of the locality's gun violence problems, and gaps in programming and services still exist. Chapter 5 describes the role that the local and state governments can play in providing leadership, technical assistance, and funding to support and sustain the successful implementation of local gun violence reduction initiatives and expand their reach.

## **Prevention programs help reduce gun violence by providing guidance and support for youth**

Prevention programs address risk factors that lead to violence and provide young people with an alternative path toward a productive future. Prevention programs are intended to reduce gun violence over the long term, and some program results may not be realized for years. Prevention programs vary in their intensity. Some simply provide supervised safe spaces for youth when they are not in school while others offer intensive mentorship-based programs with well-defined curricula. Other government programs, such as assistance programs, are not specifically intended to prevent community violence but are just as important for helping address risk factors like lack of job skills, poor health care, or food insecurity. Public schools particularly provide services that can help prevent violence, including academic supports, counseling, and “wrap-around” services based on individual student needs.

Prevention programs are provided by city departments and nonprofit CBOs. Local libraries, parks and recreation departments, and CBOs operate community centers and youth afterschool programs in several localities. For example, CBOs like Believe, Pray, Overcome and Stop the Violence 757 run small afterschool programs in a few Hampton Roads localities, while parks and recreation departments in Norfolk, Portsmouth, Richmond, and Roanoke city run larger programs in those cities. Both cities and CBOs operate intensive mentorship-based prevention programs in most of Virginia's higher gun violence localities. For example, Hampton operates its own intensive mentorship-based program called Hopeful Hampton, while a CBO called REAL LIFE provides

mentorship to high-risk youth in several Central Virginia localities. Programs like these are funded through local government funds, state funds, and privately raised funds.

### **All higher gun violence localities have at least one intensive mentorship-based prevention program, which can deter high-risk youth from becoming involved in violence if implemented effectively**

Intensive mentorship-based prevention programs are one of the most important approaches for preventing gun violence. These programs focus on serving young people who are at especially high risk of involvement in violence because they have been targeted or threatened, have exhibited concerning behaviors, or are involved in gangs or other criminal activity. High-risk youth are identified and referred to these programs through schools, courts, other prevention and intervention programs, concerned family members, or past and current participants. Depending on the referral, participation could be mandatory or voluntary, and programs offer incentives to keep participants engaged, such as meals and prosocial activities like games and sports. Programs range from a few months to over a year before participants graduate, but mentors continue to have contact with participants for months or years after graduation. In some programs, the curriculum is similar for all participants while other programs use a case management approach to develop a tailored individual development plan.

Research literature has found that mentorship-based prevention programs, when appropriately designed and implemented, are effective at reducing gun violence. For example, one study showed a 44 percent reduction in participant arrests relative to a control group. Another found a 23 percent reduction in the probability of participants being arrested for violent crimes, with impacts lasting at least three years. More broadly, research shows these programs promote positive behaviors, such as reduced aggression and improved academic outcomes. Research has found the programs are most effective when they include four key elements: mentorship, changing behaviors, school and career readiness, and parental engagement.

- **Mentorship.** Mentors serve as responsible adult role models who can provide participants with guidance and sound advice, such as talking participants through violent thoughts or impulses.
- **Changing behaviors.** Programs include lessons and activities intended to change participants' behaviors by making them think before taking life-altering actions, such as joining a gang or escalating an argument to violence, and working with participants to examine the roots of their violent or destructive behaviors, such as unaddressed trauma from past experiences.
- **School and career readiness.** Programs typically have school attendance and performance requirements, provide tutoring and homework assistance, have additional career readiness programming, and expose participants to opportunities that inspire them to think about their futures.

“ One of the main things we’re doing is providing that adult voice of good reason and guidance that kids are not getting elsewhere, so they’re not just learning from other kids in similar situations. And we’re credible because we’re there in the house, at the funeral, we’re there over time. Trying to give them other choices. Other cards to play. Other ways to go forward. ”

– Prevention program staff

“ A lot of gun violence comes from being unable to cope with feelings. ‘My homeboy got jumped’ and instead of processing it my reaction is to pick up a gun and ‘handle it.’ Need to give kids the ability to express how they feel, to recognize their trauma... they’re kids at the end of the day, but they’re making adult decisions. I ask them: ‘What would 30-year-old you think about what you’re considering doing?’ ”

– Prevention program staff

- **Parental engagement.** Programs work with parents through joint counseling sessions, discussing topics like establishing and enforcing household rules and promoting appropriate behaviors.

In Virginia, most of the nine higher gun violence localities have at least one city- or CBO-operated intensive mentorship-based prevention program for high-risk youth that includes the key elements. For example, Roanoke city's Youth & Gang Prevention Program works with a caseload of 20 clients identified as being at high risk of gun violence. Program mentors work with youth clients over an 18-month period, providing guidance and assistance in achieving goals tailored to each individual client's needs. In Richmond, the Broken Men Foundation runs a 20-week, mentorship-based Youth Academy for 80 participants identified as high risk. The program's curriculum includes activities and lessons on changing behaviors, fostering academic improvement, and laying a foundation for career success. Both programs also include parental engagement as a key element. While programs are operating in most higher gun violence localities, their capacity is limited, and they are not necessarily reaching all individuals in need.

### **All higher gun violence localities have some afterschool or youth employment programs, which provide young people with safe spaces and opportunities that can reduce risk of violence**

*“ All the kids have access to guns, and all of them are being scouted out for gangs. The gangs see us as a threat because kids want to come to us rather than the gang. ”*

*“ If they're not coming to us, they're latch key kids going home to an empty house or out on the streets and getting involved in risky activities. ”*

*“ The more time you give kids on their own, the more time they have unoccupied, the more likely it is for violence to happen. ”*

**– Prevention program staff**

Afterschool and youth employment programs serve youth in general from high gun violence communities. They include community centers, programs based around pro-social activities (e.g., sports, music, arts), and city-sponsored youth job placement programs. Unlike afterschool or career readiness programs in other communities, programs in higher gun violence communities focus on changing behaviors that lead to violence and providing a safe haven from it.

Afterschool programs, which also include summer programs when school is not in session, offer young people safe spaces under trusted adults when they otherwise might be unsupervised. These programs often help with schoolwork, provide pro-social activities, or offer components that explicitly try to prevent violence, such as art and music therapy or sessions on emotional regulation and conflict resolution. Research suggests that, while afterschool programs are generally less effective at *reducing* behaviors that can lead to violence than more intensive approaches, they are beneficial for addressing *the negative effects* of gun violence on youth. Research on afterschool programs' effectiveness at reducing violence-related behaviors is mixed: some studies found little relationship, while others found positive effects from programs that explicitly try to address and change negative behaviors. Afterschool programs can be less effective than intensive mentorship-based programs because they serve a wider audience and are not specifically focused on the individuals most likely to be involved in gun violence. However, these afterschool programs can help address the negative social and mental health effects of regular exposure to gun violence among the broader community by providing needed supports and improving quality of life for young

people. Several studies found program participation improved self-perceptions and positive social behaviors.

Youth employment programs help prepare participants for the workplace, place them in a job with a city department or private employer, and pay them for their work. Programs help prevent gun violence by providing young people with immediate financial gain and a path toward long-term employment, reducing incentives to become involved in criminal activities that can lead to violence. Staff from multiple Virginia programs highlighted success stories where participants had gone on to permanent full-time jobs at the employer where they had been placed.

Research literature on youth employment programs found they have been effective at reducing violence and can have long-lasting effects. Studies across various cities demonstrate this impact. For example,

- A study in Chicago found a 43 percent reduction in violent crime for disadvantaged youth engaged in a large summer employment program compared with a control group, both during and after the program ended.
- A study of a large Boston youth employment program found a 35 percent reduction in violent crime among participants.
- A study in New York City found a 20 percent reduction in the chance of felony arrests for participants.

In Virginia, all nine higher gun violence localities have at least one city- or CBO-operated afterschool prevention program, and several had a youth employment program. For example, Norfolk's Parks and Recreation department transports students from school to afterschool programming at its community centers; Richmond's New Life Community Center provides afterschool and summer programs for youth from high gun violence communities across the city; and Roanoke city's Melrose Library provides afterschool and summer programming for young people in the city's highest gun violence neighborhood. Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Richmond, and Roanoke city have all established city-sponsored youth employment programs within the past few years. While programs are operating in all higher gun violence localities, their capacity is limited, and they are not necessarily reaching all communities or individuals in need.

## **Intervention programs focus on reducing gun violence in the near-term**

Intervention programs connect with individuals who are believed to already be involved or on the cusp of perpetrating violence and are intended to reduce gun violence in the near term. Programs attempt to mediate ongoing conflicts that contribute to violence, change individual responses and behaviors, and connect individuals to prevention programs and support services to help them transition away from violent choices or lifestyles.

“ Our police chief was reflecting on an incident where they were arresting an individual and asked why they were doing this, and the person said: ‘if I had a job, I wouldn’t be doing this.’ For young people with their mom working two jobs, they might start dealing drugs or robbing people to get money. So, what we came up with is a jobs program to get them trained with skills they can take to an employer. ”

— City staff

A key component of intervention programs is the involvement of community members. These members help programs build trust and credibility with the broader community and develop positive relationships between interveners and individuals who are targeted for interventions.

### **Several high gun violence localities have violence interruption programs, which use community members to mediate conflicts and connect high-risk individuals to needed support services**

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**Credible messengers** are individuals who are known and respected in their communities and can form relationships and build trust with those at high risk of violence. Credible messengers sometimes have “lived experience” that can help them relate to high-risk community members, such as past experiences with gun violence, previous incarceration, or prior gang membership. They also often grew up in the communities they serve.

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Violence interruption programs, also referred to as street outreach programs, are one of the most prominent and promising intervention models. These programs employ “credible messengers” (sidebar) from high gun violence communities as violence interrupters, who are trained to prevent shootings in their communities by identifying and mediating conflicts. Sometimes the conflict is mediated before gun violence occurs, while other times interventions prevent retaliation following a shooting. Once the underlying conflict is addressed, violence interrupters will follow up and monitor the conflict to ensure it does not re-escalate to the point of violence.

In addition to mediating specific conflicts, many violence interruption programs attempt to identify individuals at highest risk of becoming victims or perpetrators of violence and help them change behaviors to prevent violence. This may involve connecting high-risk individuals to an intensive mentorship-based prevention program or having program staff serve directly as mentors and case managers. Some violence interruption programs employ separate outreach workers or case managers to do prevention-oriented work, distinct from the violence interrupters who mediate conflicts.

Violence interruption programs are funded through a mix of federal, state, and local funds. Local governments typically contract with a CBO, which employs violence interrupters and manages day-to-day program operations. Violence interrupters are employed under contract, not as city employees, to ensure independence from government institutions like the police and provide needed flexibility. This flexibility is key, as violence interrupters typically work non-traditional hours and sometimes have personal backgrounds that may disqualify them from government employment (e.g., criminal history, prior gang associations).

Independence from law enforcement is crucial for interrupters’ credibility in communities that often mistrust police. This separation allows interrupters to prevent violence using methods distinct from police tactics; they do not assist with law enforcement investigations or share information about the individuals they work with. However, positive relationships between law enforcement and violence interrupters are vital for effective violence reduction. For example, violence interrupters can receive high-level information from law enforcement about potentially violent situations.

The preponderance of evidence shows violence interrupter programs can contribute to reductions in gun violence when implemented well. For example, a systemic review of a well-known violence interrupter program, Cure Violence, found that the program

“*As police, we can’t go into the community and talk to felons or active gang members the way they can...Interrupters are filling a key lane. Police are here to deter and solve crime—we are not interveners. Interrupters know when something is happening that could lead to violence and intervene in that situation before it escalates to something that affects the wider community or harms innocent people.*”

– Virginia police chief

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contributed to a significant decline in gun violence in four U.S. cities, and was associated with a 63 percent reduction in shootings in New York City, 52 percent reduction in homicides in Chicago, and smaller but significant reductions in Baltimore and Philadelphia. However, poor implementation of some violence interrupter programs has resulted in mixed or non-significant outcomes in some areas. An evaluation of the Safe Streets program in Baltimore found that while most neighborhoods served by the program experienced significant reductions in homicides and nonfatal shootings, a few did not, likely because of differences in program implementation. Additionally, some evaluations found that a few interrupter programs have struggled to achieve long-term positive effects, primarily because of funding instability and employee turnover.

Several Virginia localities have implemented their own violence interruption programs. For example, Norfolk worked with a national group in 2022 to conduct a problem analysis of gun violence in several high gun violence neighborhoods and launched a violence interruption pilot program in one neighborhood in 2024, under a partnership with a CBO called Community First. Following the success of this pilot, the Community First program expanded to five neighborhoods in 2025 and now employs over 40 violence interrupters and outreach workers. Other localities operate smaller violence interruption programs, including Hampton, Hopewell, Newport News, and Portsmouth; Richmond is in the process of developing a program.

### **Several higher gun violence localities have group violence intervention programs, which encourage members of groups known to cause violence to change behaviors**

Group violence intervention (GVI) is an intervention strategy built on partnerships among law enforcement, social service and support providers, and community members. GVI typically targets “groups/gangs” that frequently cause violence (sidebar) and directly communicates the risks and consequences of violence to encourage members of these groups to change their behavior.

GVI efforts are typically coordinated by a program manager employed or contracted by the city or county government. Partners from the three components typically include:

- Law enforcement, such as leaders from local police departments (e.g., unit supervisors), special unit officers like violent crime detectives, prosecutors, and parole or probation officers.
- Service and support partners, which typically include staff from local social services agencies, mental health agencies, intensive prevention programs, and street outreach programs.

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**Groups/gangs** is a broad term that refers to any social network of individuals who commit violent crimes together. This can include the traditional organized nationally known gangs, as well as more informal neighborhood or social groups that do not have a set hierarchy or business interests. The terms “gangs,” “sets,” “blocs,” and “crews” all refer to groups.

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- Community members, which is crucial for building credibility with group/gang members, including individuals directly affected by gun violence (survivors, victims' family members, former group/gang members, former prison inmates) and leaders from faith-based and other community organizations.

*“If we have a shooting incident and don't have enough to charge someone but know about someone involved, we will do a custom notification to let them know they are on our radar and try to help them get out of the lifestyle that is dragging them down.”*

**– Virginia police officer**

In the GVI model, GVI partners first focus on identifying the small number of individuals and groups who are suspected of contributing to gun violence in the community. Law enforcement and community partners use crime data and their knowledge of communities to identify and locate these individuals. GVI partners then engage with these individuals—either via a “call-in” group meeting with all partners or through a “custom notification,” where a small team of partners visits individuals at their home or on the street. GVI partners deliver a four-point message: (1) their focus is on reducing violence, not punishment; (2) GVI partners want them to remain safe and out of jail; (3) GVI partners will provide services to help them move away from violent lifestyles; but (4) law enforcement will apply focused enforcement and severe legal consequences if they continue to perpetuate violence. (Law enforcement still fully investigates and pursues charges for crimes that have already been committed.)

#### **CASE STUDY 4-1**

##### **Diffusion of gun violence threat by GVI partners**

In summer 2024, a local police department received warning that an individual who recently returned from prison was threatening to shoot someone who had been involved in his original conviction. The individual was brought before the locality's GVI partnership through a “call-in,” where police informed him that if the targeted individual ended up shot, he would be the first person they looked at for arrest. They also offered him connections to community resources that could help him avoid potential violent acts, including relocation. The individual ultimately accepted the relocation offer and did not follow up on his threats.

Evaluations across multiple cities show GVI can significantly reduce gun violence when implemented with fidelity. A meta-analysis of 24 focused deterrence programs found GVI strategies contributed to an average 33 percent reduction in violent crime, with some sites seeing larger effects (e.g., 63 percent reduction of youth homicides in Boston and a 42 percent reduction in gun homicides in Stockton, California). In contrast, several evaluations have found GVI programs to have a minimal effect on violence when they were not implemented with fidelity. Evaluations have also found that GVI programs that focus on group/gang intervention are more impactful than those that focus more broadly on high-risk individuals in a locality.

Several localities in Virginia have implemented programs based on the GVI model. For example, Roanoke city launched a GVI program in 2024 using state grant funds to hire a dedicated GVI coordinator. Stakeholders report the program is still in

development but has shown early success, including leading to the de-escalation of several potentially violent situations. The City of Hampton also operates a GVI program, which is funded primarily through local funds, and city representatives report that it is a key component of the city's community gun violence prevention and intervention efforts.

### **Hospital-based violence intervention programs, which serve most higher gun violence localities, intervene with victims to prevent retaliatory gun violence and provide support services**

Hospital-based violence intervention programs (HVIPs) are community violence interventions typically located in major hospital trauma centers that treat high volumes of gun violence victims. The main goal is to prevent gun violence survivors from retaliating or being reinjured later by intervening during the critical period immediately following an assault, when survivors typically are more receptive to positive behavioral changes that can prevent future violence. HVIP staff include both the hospital-based clinical staff (e.g., trauma surgeons, nurses, mental health professionals) and dedicated violence intervention staff (sidebar).

In Virginia, HVIPs that serve victims of community gun violence are primarily based on a model developed by VCU Health's Injury and Violence Prevention Program (IVPP) known as "Bridging the Gap." VCU Health's IVPP receives state funds to provide training and technical assistance to other hospitals to implement the Bridging the Gap model. Under this model, HVIP staff intervene with victims and their families in the emergency department or at the hospital bedside once a patient is medically stable. HVIP staff first de-escalate patients' desire for retaliation and address immediate trauma. They then review the incident with the victim, explore non-violent conflict resolution strategies, assess the client's safety risk, explore coping strategies, and identify available social support networks for the client and their family. This initial intervention culminates in a plan to help steer the client away from future violence.

Following discharge, HVIP staff provide robust case management for up to two years to help support the client's recovery and prevent reinjury or retaliation. Near-term support can include helping a client relocate for their safety, assisting with navigating public systems like Medicaid or the criminal justice system, or facilitating access to community-based mental health services. Long-term support addresses social contributors to violence by connecting clients with resources for housing, employment, and educational support, in addition to providing mentorship and emotional support.

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HVIP violence intervention staff are trained to provide crisis intervention, assessment, case management, resource connections, and other non-medical supports. As in other intervention programs, it is important that these staff are culturally competent and can relate to the clients they serve, so they often have lived experience with violence and come from similar communities as their clients.

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“ They just had a life changing experience, so we are in the sweet spot for figuring out what we can do to get them out of this position. I'm going to keep showing up for them—they see that and it gives them hope. I think people want to change but don't know how or they're scared to do it themselves, so that's where we help. ”

— HVIP staff

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## CASE STUDY 4-2

### Bedside intervention and case management example at VCU Health

VCU Health's Bridging the Gap (BTG) HVIP team received notice from the emergency department's trauma list that a patient arrived with a gunshot wound. Once the patient was out of surgery, a BTG violence intervention specialist visited the patient at his bedside to review the violent incident and share information about the BTG program. The patient was initially resistant but ultimately chose to participate after several visits from the specialist.

The specialist worked with the patient to learn about what led up to the shooting, discussed non-violent conflict resolution strategies, and developed a safety plan for the patient's discharge. As part of this plan, the BTG team helped the patient relocate to his mother's house to avoid potential additional violence and assisted with applying for Medicaid and disability benefits. Over the next 12 months, the BTG team provided transportation so the patient could attend follow-up appointments and connected the patient to employment assistance in the community. The patient has not been involved in any additional gun violence following his injury.

Evaluations across the country have found that HVIPs are effective at disrupting community gun violence cycles and improving client well-being. An evaluation of an established program in Virginia reported a 3.6 percent reinjury rate for program participants compared with 15 percent for non-participants. Research also shows that HVIP participants are less likely to be arrested for future violent crimes and benefit from reduced mental health symptoms and alcohol use, improved emotional regulation, and greater engagement with medical and community services.

HVIPs serve eight of the nine Virginia localities with the highest rates of community gun violence identified in this report. HVIPs located in Newport News, Norfolk, Petersburg, Richmond, and Roanoke city serve victims from those localities, as well as victims of gun violence in surrounding communities such as Hampton (served by Newport News HVIP), Hopewell (served by Petersburg HVIP), and Portsmouth (served by Norfolk HVIP). Danville is currently the only locality among the nine localities with higher rates of community gun violence that does not have an HVIP in or near the locality.

HVIPs rely on a mix of federal, state, local, and private funding. In 2019, the state's Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) directed federal grant funds to HVIPs in four Virginia localities, and in 2022 DCJS provided state Firearm Violence Intervention and Prevention grants to fund these programs. State grants currently support HVIPs in 10 health systems across the state, as well as the training and technical assistance efforts provided to these HVIPs by VCU Health's IVPP.

## Response programs help address consequences of gun violence for victims and communities

Response programs are intended to provide non-medical assistance to victims, families, and communities following an incident. Identifying and addressing the impacts of community gun violence on the individual and community level soon after incidents occur can help to mitigate impacts and interrupt cycles of violence.

### Several localities have established stabilization and case management programs to help gun violence victims and their families meet basic needs after incidents

Stabilization programs provide comprehensive assistance to victims in the immediate and long-term aftermath of an incident. Immediately following an incident, individuals often need support for physical safety, mental health trauma, and basic daily needs, such as transportation, food, and childcare. Stabilization programs address these needs by first ensuring individuals are physically safe, often through temporary relocation. The programs then develop individualized safety or resiliency plans that triage long-term needs.

Once these plans are developed, program staff provide intensive case management. This includes referring and connecting victims and families to other community resources like mental health services, transporting individuals to medical appointments, and providing temporary financial assistance for basic needs like food, rent, or utilities. These programs can help keep victims and families safe from potential retaliatory violence and set them on a path for recovery.

Some localities in Virginia have developed dedicated stabilization and case management teams to serve victims of community gun violence and their families. For example, Portsmouth operates a stabilization program that is coordinated by a staff member of the city's police department. The coordinator connects victims and families to a network of CBOs that provide stabilization services 24 to 48 hours after an incident, followed by ongoing case management (Community of Change, Edward Brown Foundation, and The Footprint Foundation). Similarly, in Roanoke city, a community-based group made up of mothers of gun violence victims respond to fatal incidents within 24–48 hours to provide emotional support, financial and logistical help with funeral planning, and connections to other community resources (FEDUP). In Richmond, HVIPs provide most stabilization and case management services, but also partner with the health department and a network of CBOs to provide services when needed.

### Several Virginia localities deploy RESET teams to address impacts of gun violence on the broader community following incidents

Repeated exposure to violence can contribute to a variety of negative impacts on the community, including mental and emotional health impacts on community residents

“ We are the first responders, doing the ‘chest compressions’ so to speak. It is hard to stabilize a person if they’re still afraid of where they are living. If their home is shot up [...] they might need relocation. They might also need food and mental health support, but it’s hard to think about anything if your life is in danger. ”

– Stabilization program staff

and a reduced sense of safety. Several Virginia localities have implemented Rapid Engagement of Support in the Event of Trauma (RESET) teams to help address these impacts on affected communities. RESET teams are typically coordinated by local police departments and include volunteers from multiple city departments and CBOs. Teams visit neighborhoods within 72 hours of a gun violence incident and go door-to-door to talk with residents about the incident, listen to concerns, and provide residents with information about available resources, such as grief counseling.

While the primary purpose of RESET teams is to disseminate information on available resources to community members, they also solicit feedback on how neighborhoods can be made safer. For example, one RESET team leader said residents often report information about broken streetlights or blighted properties that are facilitating crime in the neighborhood. These issues can then be elevated to the appropriate city entity. RESET team members also reported that their neighborhood walks can help improve relationships between the community and police, which may encourage community members to assist in future investigations of gun violence incidents.

## **New law enforcement approaches and technologies can help better avoid and solve violent gun crimes**

Law enforcement plays a critical role in responding to and preventing gun violence. In the immediate aftermath of an incident, police officers are often the first to arrive, secure the scene, provide aid to the injured, and begin the initial investigation. Police departments are also focused increasingly on proactive measures to deter violence, including using data to identify high-risk areas and individuals and building relationships with communities to foster trust and encourage cooperation when a crime happens. Police departments can also play a broader role by connecting community members with other services. For example, officers may be the first to identify individuals in crisis or at risk of perpetrating violence and connect them with mental health services.

In response to increased gun violence in recent years, police departments have adopted new patrolling strategies, staffing approaches, and technologies. Across Virginia's higher gun violence localities, departments reported using a variety of strategies to better respond to and prevent future incidents. These range from new staffing models designed to ensure timely investigation of all gun violence incidents, to gunshot detection systems for quickly pinpointing and responding to incidents as they occur. Staffing strategies are generally less costly to implement, requiring only minor officer training since departments can restructure or reassign existing personnel. Conversely, new technological upgrades can be expensive. Many of these initiatives have been funded through state gun violence reduction grant programs (see Chapter 5). Police departments emphasized that this funding has been instrumental, stressing that continuing and/or increasing it would allow them to sustain and expand their efforts.

Prosecutors in local commonwealth’s attorney offices also play an important role in addressing community gun violence by protecting the public and holding offenders accountable. Community gun violence cases can be especially complex to investigate and prosecute, so commonwealth’s attorneys work closely with law enforcement to compile robust evidence and provide victim-witness services to encourage individuals to testify in court. Because only a small number of people are responsible for the higher levels of gun violence that some communities experience, commonwealth’s attorneys focus on the most violent offenders and use their discretion to determine whether cases should be prosecuted by their office or referred for federal prosecution, as appropriate. Commonwealth’s attorneys also partner with law enforcement and other community stakeholders on initiatives like focused deterrence and GVI programs to disrupt cycles of violence. State funding has also been used to provide localities with additional prosecutorial resources (see Chapter 5).

### **Police use new enforcement and staffing strategies along with technology to increase capacity and better address gun violence**

Police departments use several enforcement strategies to mitigate and prevent gun violence. Departments have generally been short-staffed since 2020, which has exacerbated the challenges of responding to community gun violence. To increase their resource capacity, departments have incorporated various evidence-based patrolling strategies, such as stratified and hot spot policing. Stratified policing categorizes crime problems (e.g., individuals, geographic areas, etc.) and assigns them to specific personnel based on their roles and expertise. For example, an area with a high concentration of gun violence might be assigned to a captain or lieutenant instead of being treated as part of a patrol officer’s beat. This provides a higher level of resources and accountability for addressing crime in the area. Hot spot policing involves short, focused patrols (10–15 minutes) in high gun violence areas, rather than drive-bys or an extended police presence. Random, intermittent patrols curb crime in hot spot areas because potential offenders are less likely to engage in crime if they cannot predict when police will appear.

Departments have also revamped their investigative staffing to better respond to gun violence. Several departments have developed “shoot teams” to ensure there is a detective or specialized team going to the scene of all minor firearm incidents (e.g., non-injury shooting, brandishing). Before the creation of these teams, pandemic-era staffing shortages meant that many of these minor cases were uninvestigated or backlogged. Because minor firearm incidents can often be precursors to more serious incidents, such as assaults or homicides, these specialized shoot teams can help law enforcement prevent more serious, violent crimes from occurring.

Technology has also significantly improved how law enforcement responds to and investigates gun violence. Police chiefs in high gun violence localities agreed that technological advancements have made their responses and investigations more timely and

successful. Departments reported using several technologies to achieve this, often paid for by state grant funding for gun violence reduction:

- license plate reader (LPR) cameras help officers quickly identify and apprehend potential suspects;
- gunshot detection systems (e.g., ShotSpotter) alert police to gunfire, especially in neighborhoods where gun violence is more prevalent and residents may be less likely to report gunshots, which can be used to better pinpoint hot spots or prevent an ongoing incident from escalating; and
- ballistics analysis systems analyze bullet casings recovered from crime scenes, identify the specific firearm used, and link it to other cases.

*“License plate readers and the Real Time Crime Center have been a major help. That technology has allowed us to arrest people faster. We have rings of security around these neighborhoods and if you commit a crime with a car, we are catching those people very quickly. That is a big part of building community trust.”*

**– Police chief**

Several police departments have also established “Real Time Crime Centers” (RTCCs) to help manage incident response. These centers centralize various technologies—from gunshot detectors to public and private camera feeds—in a single location staffed by crime analysts. As an incident unfolds, analysts provide live communication to officers in the field. For example, when a shooting occurs, analysts can use gunshot detection systems to alert and immediately dispatch officers to the scene. They can also access live camera footage to provide crucial information about the scene and use license plate readers to quickly pinpoint suspects. This real-time information allows law enforcement to respond to incidents faster and more efficiently, which can ultimately help build community trust.

Research literature suggests that these patrolling and technology strategies are effective at responding to and reducing gun violence. Stratified policing is an evidence-based model developed by researchers at Radford University that has been implemented by police departments in several states—including Florida, Washington, Wisconsin, North Carolina, and Georgia—and has been demonstrated to be effective at reducing crime. Hot spot policing has been rated as effective in reducing homicides and drive-by shootings by the National Institute of Justice Crime Solutions clearinghouse, as well as effective by George Mason University’s Evidence-Based Policing Matrix. Additionally, research indicates that RTCCs increased rates of solved cases, with one study showing that RTCC-assisted cases had 66 percent better odds of being solved after controlling for neighborhood, crime type, and other case characteristics (e.g., age, race of offender).

### **Law enforcement community engagement initiatives have increased and are important for responding to and avoiding future gun violence**

Community relations and trust in law enforcement have been strained in recent years, which can complicate response to and prevention of gun violence. This strain stems from several factors: the recent increase in community gun violence during the COVID-19 pandemic, the complexity of investigating these incidents, and a historical distrust exacerbated by nationally publicized events like the death of George Floyd.

When the public distrusts the police, witnesses and victims may be reluctant to report an incident or assist with an investigation, which decreases the likelihood of solving a case. In addition, in high gun violence communities, cooperating with law enforcement is seen as “snitching,” leading people to fear retaliation, according to community stakeholders. This lack of cooperation hinders investigations and prosecutions, which fuels community frustration when cases remain unsolved or the outcomes are unsatisfactory.

To build better relationships and improve trust in their communities, police departments have expanded their community engagement efforts in recent years.

- **Community policing** increases officers patrolling on foot or on bicycles instead of in vehicles, which makes it easier for officers to engage with and build relationships with the community, especially in dense areas like public housing developments.
- **Incident response initiatives** provide targeted outreach and support to community members after a violent event, such as officers conducting door-to-door neighborhood walks in the days following a shooting.
- **Community interaction initiatives** create opportunities for positive interactions with officers and allow residents to voice concerns, such as “coffee with a cop” or local community pop-ups.
- **Youth development initiatives** focus on positive youth development and violence prevention through programs like police athletic leagues and summer camps.

Virginia police departments in higher gun violence localities have implemented a range of community engagement initiatives. For example, Portsmouth has a Community Enhancement Division within the police department that sponsors several youth development initiatives (e.g., police athletic league summer camp), conducts community policing on mounted horse patrol, and coordinates several community interaction initiatives (e.g., national night out, coffee with a cop). Police departments in Richmond and Roanoke city conduct monthly community walks, in which officers go door-to-door in different neighborhoods and speak with residents about their concerns. In Danville, the police department coordinates Healing and Engagement After Recent Trauma (HEART) walks alongside other community partners, to provide support and refer neighborhood residents to mental health and other resources following gun violence incidents.

Community engagement initiatives have expanded the traditional role of police to some extent, and departments view these efforts as essential for fostering positive community relations and ultimately reducing gun violence. According to police leadership, officers are now expected to spend time interacting with the public and building relationships, which is vital for building trust and positive relationships with residents. As one police chief explained, building trust with the community is “key to reducing violent crime. We need people to talk to and cooperate with the police.”

When community members have positive relationships with law enforcement, they may be more willing to report incidents, cooperate with investigations, and avoid retaliatory violence. Several community stakeholders expressed during interviews that some retaliatory gun violence stems from a perception that law enforcement is not sufficiently invested in the community or holding offenders accountable, leading people to “take matters into their own hands.” However, positive relationships can show police care about community safety, which encourages residents to rely on law enforcement rather than resort to retaliation.

Community engagement initiatives have been demonstrated to improve relationships between law enforcement and communities, which can ultimately reduce violent crime. NIJ Crime Solutions has rated several practices as either promising or effective, including using non-enforcement interactions to improve community attitudes toward and cooperation with police. One study found that positive, non-enforcement contact with police resulted in statistically significant increases in (1) overall attitudes toward police; (2) cooperation with police; (3) perceptions of police performance and legitimacy; and (4) confidence in police. Other studies have shown that better community relations and trust in law enforcement make it easier for police to do their jobs, increase the willingness of the community to support police investigations, and reduce violent crime.

# 5 State and Local Roles in Addressing Community Gun Violence

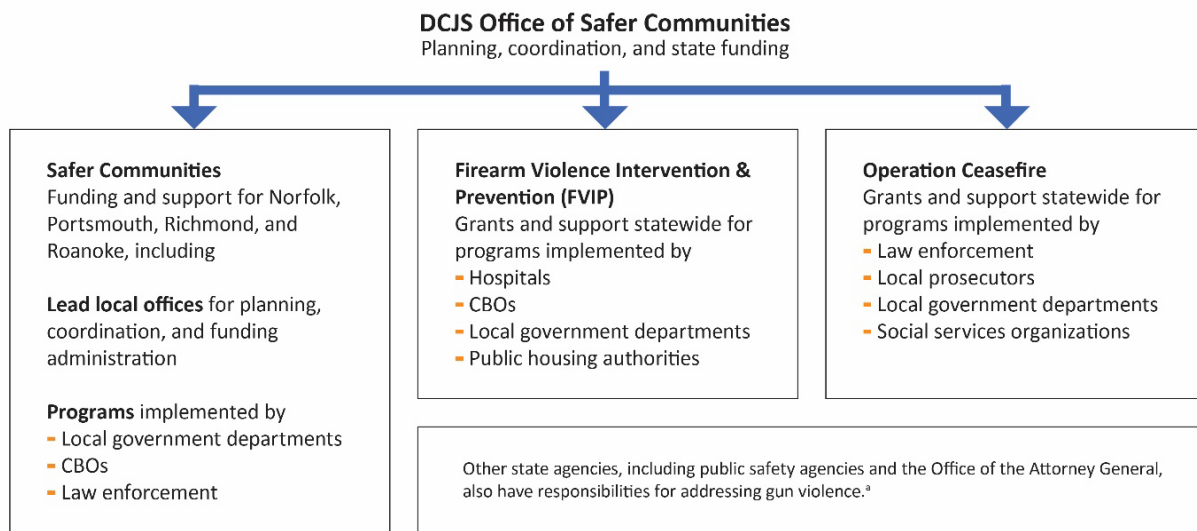
Addressing high levels of community gun violence in a locality requires a sustained, multi-stakeholder effort comprising prevention, intervention, response, and law enforcement programs, which are described in Chapter 4 of this report. Programs are delivered by a mix of city departments and private, nonprofit community-based organizations (CBOs). However, state and local government leadership is needed to ensure programs are effectively implemented, coordinated, and funded. State and local governments are currently establishing new administrative and funding structures to support and expand existing programs and to implement new ones where needed. At the state level, efforts are being coordinated through the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) Office of Safer Communities. At the local level, several higher gun violence localities have established lead offices to coordinate their efforts. A significant portion of these local efforts are being supported through state funding programs. Figure 5-1 illustrates the structure the state has established to help plan, coordinate, and fund local efforts.

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**Community-based organizations (CBOs)** are nonprofit organizations that operate one or more violence prevention, intervention, or response programs. For example, in Portsmouth Big HOMIES runs an intensive mentorship-based prevention and afterschool programs, and Give Back 2 Da Block runs a violence interrupter intervention program.

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**FIGURE 5-1**  
**State has established DCJS Office of Safer Communities to oversee state programs for addressing gun violence**



SOURCE: JLARC staff analysis.

NOTE: <sup>9</sup> Responsibilities of other state agencies include serving on the Criminal Justice Services Board that makes funding decisions for Firearm Violence Intervention and Prevention (FVIP) and Operation Ceasefire grants and administering their own programs, such as assisting with local prosecutions (Office of the Attorney General) and operating probation and re-entry programs for adult and juvenile offenders (Department of Corrections, Department of Juvenile Justice).

Local governments are best positioned to provide the ground-level leadership, planning, and coordination needed to ensure that programs are focused on the main problems driving their community gun violence issues. Local responses to gun violence vary somewhat because of each locality's unique circumstances, but the state can help improve the consistency and effectiveness of local responses when needed. Going forward, through technical assistance, oversight, evaluation, and funding, the state can help ensure that Virginia localities most affected by gun violence are able to implement well-designed and well-coordinated programs. The state can also ensure that localities with similar gun violence challenges have equal access to needed funding.

## **Localities are leading local gun violence reduction efforts and coordinating with key partners**

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**The public health model for injury prevention** establishes a framework where a lead organization is tasked with planning and coordinating a response by (1) defining and monitoring the problem, (2) identifying risk and protective factors, (3) developing and testing prevention strategies, and (4) ensuring widespread adoption and implementation of effective strategies. This approach has been used to address other public health injury risks, such as increases in motor vehicle crashes.

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Local governments are responsible for ensuring the safety of their residents and are best positioned to lead, plan, and coordinate gun violence reduction efforts. Local governments are also responsible for directing many of the resources needed to implement violence reduction efforts, including managing city departments and contracting with CBOs that directly provide many of the programs and services needed. In addition, localities control local, state, and federal funds dedicated to addressing gun violence.

JLARC staff's review of gun violence reduction efforts in Virginia and other cities found they should include three components under local leadership: (1) planning, (2) coordination, and (3) funding. Stakeholders, including city political and administrative leadership, need to support local staff leading these efforts. This approach largely aligns with the public health model for injury prevention, which has been successfully employed to address other public health crises (sidebar).

## **Local offices and advisory bodies in several localities provide leadership and oversight of gun violence reduction efforts**

Successfully addressing gun violence requires clear and consistent local leadership to ensure that efforts are well-planned, coordinated, and sustained over time. Full-time professional staff can best ensure these efforts receive the proper attention. Six of Virginia's nine higher gun violence localities have established offices dedicated to addressing gun violence, although most were only recently established in 2024 or 2025 (Table 5-1). These offices are typically small, with only one or a few staff, and are located in the mayor or city manager's office, police department, or are a stand-alone department. Offices are mostly focused on community violence, but some also address domestic violence and other forms of violence. Offices have a variety of responsibilities for leading local efforts, including developing plans for addressing gun violence, coordinating with key city and CBO partners to ensure effective implementation of programs, and administering state, local, and other funding for these efforts (Figure 5-2).

**TABLE 5-1**  
**Majority of Virginia’s higher gun violence localities have recently established offices and advisory bodies to lead violence reduction efforts**

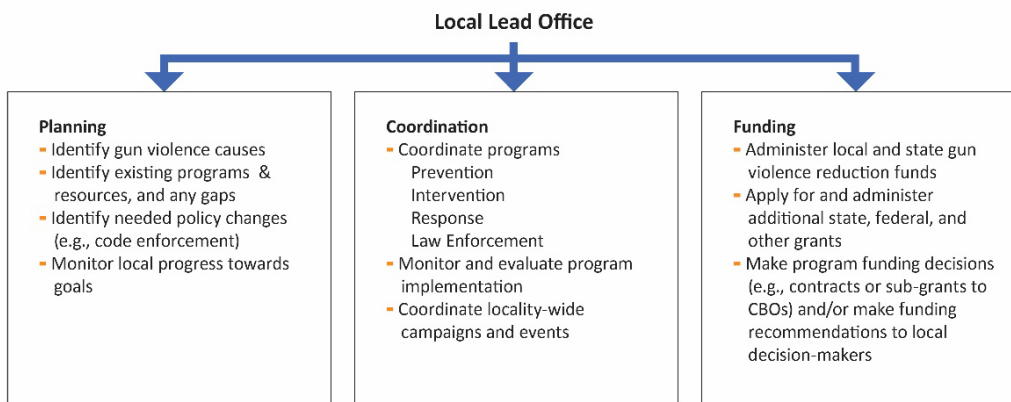
-	<b>Lead office</b>	<b>Advisory body</b>
Danville	See footnote <sup>a</sup>	-
Hampton	Office of Youth and Young Adult Opportunities (2022)	Hopeful Hampton Steering Committee (2022)
Hopewell	-	-
Newport News	Office of Community Safety (2024)	City department working group (2022)
Norfolk	Department of Military and Community Affairs (2025)	-
Petersburg	-	-
Portsmouth	Portsmouth United (2024)	Portsmouth Crime and Gun Violence Prevention Task Force (2024)
Richmond city	Office of Gun Violence Prevention (2025)	Gun Violence Prevention & Intervention Steering Committee (2022)
Roanoke city	Firearm Violence Intervention and Prevention Coordinator (2024)	Gun Violence Prevention Commission (2021)

SOURCE: JLARC staff analysis.

NOTE: Some offices and advisory bodies had a predecessor that was previously doing some of the work now assigned to them. However, except for Hampton’s office, predecessors had been performing similar work for only one-to-three years.

<sup>a</sup> Danville has established a violence prevention manager who is tasked with developing and implementing violence prevention programs for the city. However, this position does not have the same broad planning and coordination roles performed by lead offices in other localities.

**FIGURE 5-2**  
**Local lead offices are responsible for planning local gun violence reduction efforts, coordinating programs, and directing funding**



SOURCE: JLARC staff analysis.

Because gun violence reduction efforts require the cooperation and support of multiple stakeholders, five of Virginia’s nine higher gun violence localities have established advisory bodies to help facilitate their work (Table 5-1). Advisory board membership varies by locality, but members often include elected officials, city department leadership, and

CBOs. Duties of these advisory bodies also vary, but they generally help plan and oversee the lead office's work and/or advise elected officials on policy. When effectively developed and utilized, these advisory bodies can help the lead offices plan and coordinate local gun violence reduction efforts and garner support from key stakeholders.

### **Several local offices and advisory bodies are working to understand gun violence causes and plan strategies for addressing them**

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**Some localities have partnered with third parties** to assist with their initial planning and to help develop their lead office and advisory body structures. For example, Portsmouth and Hampton partnered with researchers from the Bloomberg-Harvard Center for Cities to perform assessments of gun violence in their cities and develop initial strategies.

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To effectively address gun violence, localities must first understand its causes and then formulate a strategy to address them. Localities differ on whether the lead office, advisory board, or a third party is responsible for developing these strategies (sidebar). Effective planning requires in-depth analysis of crime and socioeconomic data, and extensive discussions with law enforcement, prosecutors, city departments, CBOs, and community representatives.

To understand the causes of gun violence, a locality needs to first examine (1) the circumstances leading to violent incidents in the locality; (2) the demographic characteristics of those most frequently involved; (3) the communities where violence most often occurs; and (4) the social and environmental factors that contribute to violence. This information is vital for determining program needs and focusing on the right communities. For example, several localities reported that a significant portion of their gun violence is driven by social media disputes among youth, which meant they needed youth-oriented violence interruption programs with active monitoring of social media to identify potential conflicts. Several localities said they also found that social factors related to poverty are contributing to behaviors that lead to violence, indicating that they need afterschool programs for young people in the communities most affected by gun violence and intensive mentorship-based prevention programs for individuals most at risk.

Next, the locality needs to identify existing resources and programs that can be used to address needs and any programming gaps. Planning efforts in higher gun violence localities have identified several areas where needed programs were lacking, including insufficient afterschool and summer programming for young people, need for conflict mediation in certain communities, and need for transportation assistance to maximize existing programs.

Local planning efforts can also identify non-programmatic measures that may help to reduce gun violence. For example, a few localities found that shootings in their downtown commercial district were related to businesses that were operating irresponsibly under loopholes in their permits. These localities determined they could address this problem through changes to business license permits and stronger code enforcement.

Several localities found that a significant number of crimes were occurring in areas where deficiencies in the built environment—such as poor lighting, vacant properties, or easy escape routes—made it easier for crimes to be committed. In response, several localities made infrastructure improvements—called Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)—a part of their gun violence reduction strategy.

Richmond sends city staff to crime hot spots to assess whether environmental factors create opportunities for crime and works with appropriate departments, such as public works or code enforcement, to address them.

### **Several local offices are focusing on central coordination, monitoring, evaluation, and funding to maximize program impacts**

Lead gun violence prevention offices can help maximize the impact of gun violence programs by ensuring programs target communities most in need. For example, Norfolk's Department of Military and Community Affairs is helping the city's CBO-operated violence interrupter program expand to five communities with high violent crime rates. In addition, several offices said they had identified a few programs that were well designed but not serving the communities or populations most in need and were working with programs to better direct efforts.

Local offices can also be key in facilitating cooperation across programs. For example, the Portsmouth United office coordinates assistance to shooting victims' families, helping ensure cases transition from a CBO handling initial stabilization to another handling long-term case management. Some offices handle case management themselves. Hampton's Office of Youth and Young Adult Opportunities directly coordinates all service needs for individual cases through its Opportunities Connect program.

Local offices also are organizing city-wide campaigns and events, which staff said were important for changing social cultures that contribute to violence. In Richmond, the Office of Gun Violence Prevention is considering a campaign to run non-skippable, anti-violence ads in front of videos on social media platforms. These ads would run before content that contributes to gun violence in the city, such as "drill" videos that are used by groups/gangs to insult and challenge rivals. In Portsmouth, Portsmouth United partnered with a lead CBO—A Purpose Driven—to organize Peace Week events across the city during public school spring break, which has historically been a period of high violence in the city. The events included over 20 CBO and city department partners and provided all-day activities for young people throughout the week. The effort engaged youth from across the city, and the city did not experience its typical surge in violent crime. Portsmouth United adapted the model to the summer, where it coordinated over 40 summer youth programs for high gun violence communities across the city.

Local offices can monitor and evaluate individual programs to ensure they are working effectively. For example, Portsmouth United holds weekly meetings with all city department and CBO partners, requires quarterly program reporting on defined performance metrics, and performs random and non-random check-ins to make sure programs are operating as intended. In some cases, the local office or advisory body has control over state or local funds and can make funding decisions based on program performance. In other cases, the office or advisory body can advise the city government on how funds budgeted for violence reduction efforts should be allocated across departments.

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**The DCJS Office of Safer Communities** was established in the 2023 Appropriation Act. The act provided funding to support the establishment and operations of the office, including funds for hiring full-time coordination and research staff and contracting for strategic planning and program evaluation services with Virginia Commonwealth University.

Prior to 2022, DCJS was responsible for administering competitive grants for gun violence intervention and prevention initiatives, but appropriated funds were substantially less than available under the three current funding programs. (See Appendix E.)

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**The OAG has implemented several violent crime reduction initiatives**, including funding and cross-training U.S. attorneys who can prosecute local cases in federal courts; hiring program coordinators to facilitate meetings, events, and training across law enforcement and community partners; and implementing an anti-violence media campaign. An OAG representative serves on the Criminal Justice Services Board, which makes grant decisions for FVIP and Operation Ceasefire. The OAG's efforts are focused on 13 localities with higher gun violence.

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The last key role of local offices is to monitor locality-wide progress toward violence reduction goals, a function that advisory boards can share in performing. Currently, because most offices and advisory bodies are relatively new, they typically monitor overall crime trends reported by police departments, especially non-fatal shootings and homicides. However, offices and advisory bodies are exploring additional ways of measuring success, such as by aggregating program performance measures or reviewing other city-wide performance indicators. For example, Hampton's Office of Youth and Young Adult Opportunities tracks the number of individuals identified for focused deterrence interventions to monitor changes in the population that are likely to be involved in community violence.

## **State funding to address gun violence has increased, but some high gun violence localities have received relatively less state support**

Although most community gun violence reduction efforts are implemented at the local level, the state has a role in providing funding and technical assistance to local efforts. The state recently established the Office of Safer Communities under the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS, sidebar). DCJS oversees three gun violence reduction funding programs: Safer Communities (established in 2023), Firearm Violence Intervention and Prevention (FVIP, 2022), and Operation Ceasefire (2022).

- Safer Communities provides funding to local governments in four of Virginia's nine higher gun violence localities for local planning, coordination, and implementation of a wide variety of violence reduction programs.
- FVIP awards violence prevention and intervention grants to city department and CBO applicants from any locality in the state. FVIP also includes funding for hospital-based violence intervention program grants and dedicated amounts for Norfolk and Portsmouth.
- Operation Ceasefire grants can be awarded to applicants from any locality, and most awards have gone to commonwealth's attorney offices and local law enforcement agencies around the state. Grants have been used to hire additional prosecutors and support strategic policing initiatives, such as real time crime centers and community outreach. The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) also received an Operation Ceasefire grant from DCJS in CY23 for its gun violence reduction initiatives but now receives separate funds through the Appropriation Act (sidebar).

Through these three programs, the state has substantially increased the funding it provides for local gun violence reduction efforts. Before these programs were established, the state appropriated \$2.8 million for gun violence reduction efforts in FY21 and \$1 million in FY22. State appropriations increased to \$6.5 million in FY23 with the establishment of the FVIP and Operation Ceasefire programs. Appropriations increased

again to expand these two programs and establish Safer Communities, with total appropriations of \$36.5 million in FY24 and \$33 million per year in FY25 and FY26. That represents a \$30 million increase in funds annually appropriated for gun violence reduction over a six-year period.

Safer Communities has provided substantial funding to four localities, while other state programs have provided smaller funding amounts to all nine of the higher gun violence localities and other grantees from across the state (Table 5-2). Funds have gone to both local governments and CBOs. Hospitals are also a major recipient of funding through the FVIP program, and the hospitals receiving state funds serve most of the state's higher gun violence localities. Localities receive other state funding not reflected in the table that can be used to help support gun violence reduction efforts, such as funding for law enforcement training, juvenile community corrections, and community service boards. For additional discussion of state gun violence reduction funding programs, appropriations, and distributions, see Appendix E.

**TABLE 5-2**  
**State has provided varying funding amounts through DCJS to localities and state agencies for gun violence reduction efforts (FY21–FY26)**

	Safer Communities	FVIP	Operation Ceasefire	Other gun violence funds <sup>a</sup>	Total	Percentage of state program funds
Danville	-	\$424,810	-	-	\$424,810	1%
Hampton	-	\$25,000	\$818,330	\$1,300,000	\$2,143,330	3%
Hopewell	-	\$300,000	-	-	\$300,000	0.4%
Newport News	-	\$629,076	\$609,999	\$500,000	\$1,739,075	2%
Norfolk	\$10,534,462	\$2,400,000	\$113,753	-	\$13,048,215	16%
Petersburg	-	\$247,229	\$585,344	-	\$832,573	1%
Portsmouth	\$8,715,182	\$1,176,000	\$467,257	\$495,394	\$10,853,833	14%
Richmond city	\$10,421,335	\$579,446	\$1,149,274	\$500,000	\$12,650,055	16%
Roanoke city	\$5,904,021	\$772,999	\$200,000	\$500,000	\$7,377,020	9%
Other localities	-	\$1,886,463	\$12,498,235	-	\$14,384,698	18%
Hospitals <sup>b</sup>	-	\$13,550,675	-	-	\$13,550,675	17%
State agencies <sup>c</sup>	-	-	\$2,856,044	-	\$2,856,044	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$35,575,000</b>	<b>\$21,991,698</b>	<b>\$19,298,236</b>	<b>\$3,295,394</b>	<b>\$80,160,328</b>	

SOURCE: JLARC staff analysis of appropriation acts and DCJS reports and data.

NOTE: Funding amounts shown are obligated amounts, not appropriations or actual funds spent. Safer Communities dollars shown are the total amounts that were obligated to local governments by DCJS under the approach required in the Appropriation Act; a substantial amount of these funds were not spent and reverted to the state. FVIP and Operation Ceasefire dollars shown are grant awards to local governments, specific local departments or offices, and CBOs based in those localities; funding to CBOs could go to programs operating in the assigned locality and/or other localities in the region.

<sup>a</sup> Prior to the establishment of the three DCJS-administered programs, the General Assembly provided smaller amounts of funding to localities for gun violence prevention through DCJS. See Appendix E for additional discussion.

<sup>b</sup> Hospitals that received funding were Ballad Johnston (Abingdon), Bon Secours (Richmond, Petersburg), Carilion (Roanoke), Chesapeake Regional (Chesapeake), Children's Hospital of the King's Daughters (Norfolk), Inova (Fairfax), Riverside Regional (Newport News), Sentara (Norfolk), UVA Medical Center (Charlottesville), and VCU Health (Richmond); hospitals serve victims of community gun violence from throughout their region and not just from the locality where they are located.

<sup>c</sup> State agencies that received funding were the Office of the Attorney General and Virginia State Police.

### **Safer Communities funds are the most significant state resource for addressing gun violence but are available to only four localities**

All of Virginia’s nine higher gun violence localities have received some amount of state gun violence reduction funding, but the localities included in Safer Communities have received substantially more (Table 5-3). The four Safer Communities localities indicated this funding was critical for establishing their lead planning and coordination offices and for building out needed programs. For example, Norfolk used some of its Safer Communities funds to expand its CBO-operated violence interrupter program.

The five localities not included in Safer Communities have varying degrees of local planning, coordination, and programming in place for reducing gun violence, but could likely benefit from additional funding. For example, Hampton established its lead office with the help of other state funds that have now been exhausted. Hampton’s lead office staff said additional funds are needed to provide essential support services for high-risk individuals identified through its case management program. Additionally, Newport News recently established a small lead office—currently just one position—without state assistance. However, the CBO-operated violence interrupter program in the city, VICTOR, recently lost its federal funding and new funds are needed to keep the program going. Of the three smaller localities with higher rates of gun violence—Danville, Hopewell, and Petersburg—none had a designated local coordinator, and city staff indicated Safer Communities funding would enable them to establish this position and help them expand gun violence reduction initiatives.

**TABLE 5-3**  
**Localities included in Safer Communities have received substantially more state funding for addressing gun violence than other higher gun violence localities**

	<b>State gun violence reduction funding</b> (DCJS programs only, FY21–26)	<b>Homicide rate</b> (average per 100,000, 2020–2024)	<b>Population</b> (2024, rounded)	<b>State gun violence reduction funding per person</b> (rounded)
<b>Safer Communities localities</b>				
Portsmouth	\$10,853,833	34.6	96,500	\$112
Roanoke city	\$7,377,020	17.7	98,000	\$75
Norfolk	\$13,048,215	19.6	231,000	\$56
Richmond city	\$12,650,055	30.5	233,500	\$54
<b>Other higher gun violence localities</b>				
Petersburg	\$832,573	53.8	34,000	\$24
Hampton	\$2,143,330	16.7	137,500	\$16
Hopewell	\$300,000	27.9	23,000	\$13
Newport News	\$1,739,075	15.2	183,000	\$10
Danville	\$424,810	12.8	42,000	\$10

SOURCE: JLARC analysis of DCJS reports and data, the Virginia Department of Health’s Virginia Medical Examiner Data System (VMEDS), and U.S. Census data.

NOTE: Funding amounts shown are obligated amounts, not appropriations or actual funds spent. The four Safer Communities localities did not spend most of the funds obligated to them in FY24.

### **Additional localities could benefit from Safer Communities funding, and changing expenditure rules would allow for more effective use**

Lead local offices and city and CBO program staff emphasized the need for predictable annual funding to sustain their efforts. They noted that continuity is essential to success, but it is difficult to sustain existing programs or launch new initiatives when future funding is uncertain. They also noted that many federal grant opportunities were no longer available and, consequently, state and local funding were especially critical for supporting their work.

Safer Communities, FVIP, and Operation Ceasefire are all designed to provide funding to help reduce gun violence, but Safer Communities provides a more reliable funding source for localities that receive it. Unlike FVIP or Ceasefire grants, localities do not have to compete for Safer Communities funding. Funding is set aside specifically for the designated localities so there is less uncertainty about whether they will receive funding or how much they will receive.

- Under Safer Communities, the legislature directs DCJS to distribute prescribed funding to the four localities identified in the Appropriation Act. The funding is to be used to identify, coordinate, and implement “evidence-informed” gun violence reduction strategies. Recipients are required to establish an office or position to lead local planning and coordination.
- Under FVIP and Operation Ceasefire, funds are appropriated to non-reverting accounts administered by DCJS. DCJS awards most of these funds to individual applicants as competitive grants, such as a grant to a specific city department, CBO, or hospital system. Applicants can be from any Virginia locality.

The General Assembly’s 2025 Appropriation Act would have expanded Safer Communities funding to Hampton and Newport News and increased the total program appropriation by \$5 million. However, the governor vetoed the expansion because gun violence reduction initiatives, “grew by over 400 percent between FY23 and FY26 from \$6.5 million to \$33 million with no measures being provided demonstrating the effectiveness of these programs.” The veto explanation notes that, “additional funding for these programs should be considered in the next biennial budget, and not in FY26, when the effectiveness of these programs can be better evaluated.”

DCJS is taking several steps to address the governor’s concerns. DCJS has established several staff positions in the Office of Safer Communities to assist local lead offices, city departments, and CBOs with setting performance measures, monitoring grants, and improving outcomes. DCJS also requires performance reporting from program grantees and is updating those requirements while Safer Communities and the other funding programs mature. However, because the Safer Communities funding program and the local efforts it supports are new, their performance will not be able to be fully evaluated for some time. Some of the local lead offices were established only this year, and offices have not yet implemented all of their planned efforts.

DCJS has contracted with Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) to develop uniform performance measures, work with localities to build data collection and analysis capacity, and evaluate the effectiveness of local Safer Communities coordinator positions (i.e., the lead offices). These efforts will help DCJS improve performance reporting requirements for Safer Communities. However, DCJS staff indicated that some of VCU's efforts, such as local coordinator evaluation, are planned to conclude after the 2026 General Assembly session, and it could be longer before DCJS has collected sufficient performance data to fully evaluate the program.

Should the General Assembly wish to expand Safer Communities, it could either wait for DCJS to evaluate the program's results or proceed based on current evidence. State data indicates several localities that do not receive Safer Communities funding are experiencing equal or greater levels of gun violence than the recipient localities and could benefit from funds to create and sustain centralized local planning, coordination, and programming efforts. Current evidence also suggests that the types of prevention, intervention, response, and law enforcement programs Safer Communities helps fund are effective at reducing gun violence when properly implemented. To support and sustain gun violence reduction efforts in Virginia's higher gun violence localities, the General Assembly could consider expanding Safer Communities funding to Danville, Hampton, Hopewell, Newport News, and Petersburg.

### **POLICY OPTION 1**

The General Assembly could amend the Appropriation Act to extend Safer Communities funding to the cities of Danville, Hampton, Hopewell, Newport News, and Petersburg.

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#### **Localities distribute Safer Communities funds in three ways.**

They (1) allocate funding to city departments for specific purposes, such as city-managed intensive mentorship-based prevention programs or police community engagement efforts; (2) use funding to pay for contract services from a CBO, such as a violence interrupter program; and/or (3) provide grant funding to CBOs for other needed programs, such as stabilization, case management, or after-school programs.

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Safer Communities funding has restrictive disbursement and spending rules that have hindered planning and effective program implementation, according to local stakeholders. Safer Communities funds are provided only to localities that are designated to receive them in the Appropriation Act, and localities then distribute them to city departments and CBOs (sidebar). Because Safer Communities funds are general funds that are directly appropriated to localities, the Appropriation Act requires that they be spent by the end of the fiscal year for which they were appropriated, or they revert back to the general fund. In contrast, FVIP and Operation Ceasefire program funds are appropriated to special non-reverting funds, and DCJS has the discretion to award funds as grants for time periods defined under the programs. DCJS issues FVIP and Ceasefire grants for periods ranging from one to three years.

In the first year of Safer Communities (FY24), the reversion requirement provided little time for local planning and coordination offices to perform all the administrative functions necessary before funds could be awarded to city departments and CBOs. By the time the recipient localities had the appropriate administrative structures in place to handle the funds, it was too late to spend them, and almost none of the first-year funds were spent. In the second year (FY25), almost all Safer Communities funding

was spent by localities. However, the reversion requirement still created challenges for local lead offices, city departments, and CBOs because of the short timeframe to plan and implement their programs. These stakeholders said the annual funding approach also contributes to some uncertainty in whether funds will be available for the following year's programs. For example, one locality indicated that, because of past delays in state budget enactment, funds were not made available until August or September, which affected their ability to retain program staff from year-to-year and to execute contracts with CBOs and other partners on time.

In the near term, the General Assembly could establish Safer Communities as a special *two-year* reverting fund administered by DCJS, while still designating specific localities as funding recipients. The General Assembly could maintain current budget language that sets minimum funding amounts for each recipient locality and require that any monies remaining in the Safer Communities fund at the end of the biennium revert to the general fund. This approach would help ensure localities are using funds in a timely and responsible manner but give localities two years to spend the funds instead of one.

In the long term, the General Assembly could direct DCJS to regularly evaluate and report on any changes needed for distributing Safer Communities funds among Virginia localities. For example, DCJS could find that an additional locality needs Safer Communities funding or that funds could be more effectively distributed through a formula or competitive grant approach. The results of DCJS's ongoing evaluation and recommendations for changes could be presented in the annual report of the Office of Safer Communities to the chairs of the Virginia Crime Commission, House Courts of Justice Committee, Senate Courts of Justice Committee, House Appropriations Committee, and Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee, which is required under the Appropriation Act.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 1**

The General Assembly may wish to consider amending the Appropriation Act to establish Safer Communities as a biennially reverting special fund administered by the Department of Criminal Justice Services, instead of appropriating funds directly to recipients, to give recipient localities sufficient time to use the funding for effective planning and program implementation.

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#### **RECOMMENDATION 2**

The General Assembly may wish to consider amending the Appropriation Act to direct the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) to periodically evaluate if changes are needed to the distribution of Safer Communities funding among Virginia localities and make any recommendations for changes in the DCJS Office of Safer Communities' annual report to the General Assembly.

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### **FVIP and Operation Ceasefire are important funding sources for intervention, prevention, and law enforcement initiatives**

The FVIP and Operation Ceasefire programs remain important funding sources for hospitals, law enforcement, and prosecutors. FVIP is the primary state funding source for hospital-based violence intervention (HVIP) programs, which help prevent victims from retaliating by intervening while they are in the hospital and supporting them throughout their recovery. Research on HVIPs across the country has found they are effective at helping disrupt community gun violence cycles and improving client well-being (Chapter 4). As of 2025, state funds support HVIPs at 10 health systems across the state. Operation Ceasefire provides funding to support law enforcement and prosecutors, including training, technology, and equipment, and the hiring of additional prosecutors. Stakeholders report that Operation Ceasefire funding has been critical for implementing many of the technological upgrades enabling law enforcement to more quickly respond to incidents and mitigate further gun violence (Chapter 4).

The FVIP and Operation Ceasefire funds are especially important resources for localities that do not receive Safer Communities grants. Program funding is available to qualifying applicants in all Virginia localities under a competitive grant process, rather than being designated specifically for a few localities in the state budget. Other localities are also affected by gun violence, and local governments and CBOs in these localities can apply for FVIP and Ceasefire funding to help address it. Excluding the Safer Communities localities, there were an average of 5,200 firearm-related violent offenses per year (murder, assault, robbery) across the state over the past five years (2019–2023).

Currently, the FVIP or Operation Ceasefire programs may not need additional state funding because their appropriations have recently increased and not enough time has passed to determine if the new funding level is adequate. FVIP appropriations increased from \$4 million in the first year of the program (FY23) to \$9 million per year (FY24, FY25, FY26). Operation Ceasefire funding increased from \$2.5 million in its first year (FY23) to \$17.5 million (FY24) and then declined to \$10 million per year (FY25 and FY26). Both programs are making regular grant awards, but the pace of awards is not yet equal to the pace of appropriations. Program funds are held in non-reverting accounts, and JLARC staff estimated that approximately 4 percent of FVIP funds and 13 percent of Operation Ceasefire funds were not yet obligated as of December 8, 2025. The annual funding needs for these programs will become clearer as the programs reach maturity.

In the long term, the General Assembly could direct DCJS to regularly evaluate and report on any changes recommended to the FVIP and Operation Ceasefire programs. For example, DCJS could find that there are not enough quality applications to justify current funding amounts for a program, it has received more quality applications than can be funded, or that program qualifications could be changed to add or restrict allowable uses or types of applicants. The results of DCJS's ongoing evaluation and recommendations for changes could be presented in the annual report of the Office

of Safer Communities to the chairs of the Virginia Crime Commission, House Courts of Justice Committee, Senate Courts of Justice Committee, House Appropriations Committee, and Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee, which is required under the Appropriation Act.

### RECOMMENDATION 3

The General Assembly may wish to consider amending the Appropriation Act to direct the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) to periodically evaluate if changes are needed to funding or program qualifications for the Firearm Violence Intervention and Prevention Fund or the Operation Ceasefire Grant Fund and make any recommendations for changes in the DCJS Office of Safer Communities' annual report.

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### **DCJS and localities are taking steps to enhance CBOs' capacity to qualify for grant funds and contribute to local gun violence reduction and response efforts**

Local offices said one of their biggest needs was to build CBO administrative capacity so they can qualify for and effectively manage state funds and compete for other grant opportunities. CBOs fill a variety of gun violence reduction program and support needs, from operating afterschool and intensive prevention programs to providing behavioral health services. Many of the most active CBOs in high gun violence communities are small organizations that are administratively unprepared to meet the monitoring and reporting requirements that come with state funding (sidebar). These capacity limitations can also leave CBOs poorly positioned to successfully apply for competitive grants from other sources, such as the federal government or private foundations.

DCJS and some localities have taken action to help build CBOs' administrative capacity. DCJS has two designated capacity building and sustainability coordinators tasked with working with CBOs and local governments. DCJS staff have held training sessions in higher gun violence localities to discuss expectations for grant applications. Furthermore, under its partnership with VCU, DCJS is collecting data and feedback to identify challenges encountered by grantees. DCJS staff indicated their goal is to use this information to develop administrative capacity building training programs for CBOs that will be open to both grantees and non-grantees. Some localities have implemented capacity-building initiatives, either through training programs (Portsmouth, Roanoke city) or locally funded capacity building grants (Norfolk, Newport News). Capacity building efforts will become more important as CBOs are asked to fill a greater portion of program needs in the higher gun violence localities. For example, lead offices in Richmond and Norfolk have both identified a need to increase partnerships with CBOs as they expand their gun violence reduction efforts.

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**State funds have administrative requirements to ensure funds are appropriately and effectively used.** State requirements include tracking and reporting all expenditures of state funds to ensure they comply with allowable uses for a given funding program and tracking and reporting performance metrics to ensure the state's investment is achieving its goals.

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### **DCJS could convene regular community of practice meetings that include all nine of the higher gun violence localities**

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DCJS is establishing a web portal and newsletter to communicate with grantees from all its programs, including (1) communicating administrative matters, such as when grant programs open for applications, (2) highlighting new research on effective gun violence reduction programs, and (3) highlighting programs and approaches being used in Virginia.

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Most of the local offices leading gun violence reduction efforts in Virginia are new, and office staff said they could benefit from learning about each other's strategies, programs, and partnerships. DCJS regularly convenes community of practice meetings with funding recipients, including FVIP and Operation Ceasefire grantees and the Safer Communities localities (Norfolk, Portsmouth, Richmond, Roanoke city). For example, DCJS convenes with the Safer Communities lead offices four times a year to communicate on state initiatives and administrative matters, highlight emerging program designs, discuss local progress, and provide a general forum to exchange information. These meetings facilitate coordination among Safer Communities localities but do not include offices in Hampton and Newport News, whose participation could benefit all parties. The three smaller higher gun violence localities (i.e., Danville, Hopewell, and Petersburg) lack a lead office or coordinator position and are also not included. While DCJS is establishing additional resources to communicate more broadly across the state (sidebar), DCJS should expand its community of practice meetings to include regular meetings with representatives from all nine of the higher gun violence localities. These nine localities face many of the same challenges and are taking many of the same steps to address their challenges.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 4**

The Department of Criminal Justice Services should expand its community of practice meetings to include regular meetings of representatives from Virginia's nine higher gun violence localities: Danville, Hampton, Hopewell, Newport News, Norfolk, Petersburg, Portsmouth, Richmond, and the City of Roanoke.

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## Appendix A: Study resolution

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### HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 76

*Directing the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission to study the social, physical, emotional, and economic effects of gun violence on communities across the Commonwealth. Report.*

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 12, 2024

Agreed to by the Senate, March 5, 2024

WHEREAS, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Center for Health Statistics, 4,482 Virginians died by firearm between 2018 and 2021, and the firearm homicide rate in Virginia increased by 21 percent in that time; and

WHEREAS, in addition to fatal shootings, gun violence includes other firearm-involved crimes and incidents in which a victim may suffer from non-fatal gunshot wounds, may be shot at but not wounded, or may be threatened with a brandished firearm that is not fired; and

WHEREAS, not only does gun violence result in physical harm, it can also lead to long-term adverse effects on the overall health and well-being of individuals, as well as lasting social and economic impacts on communities; and

WHEREAS, in order to reduce gun violence and its enduring consequences, it is important to understand the extent of such social, physical, emotional, and economic effects on communities in the Commonwealth; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, That the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission be directed to study the social, physical, emotional, and economic effects of gun violence on communities across the Commonwealth.

In conducting its study, the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission shall examine the impact of gun violence on (i) the overall physical health of individuals living in affected communities, (ii) the mental and emotional health of individuals living in affected communities, and (iii) the social and economic health of communities impacted by gun violence and shall consider and propose policy recommendations to address gun violence and its effects.

All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission for this study, upon request.

The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission shall complete its meetings for the first year by November 30, 2024, and for the second year by November 30, 2025, and the chairman shall submit to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems an executive summary of its findings and recommendations no later than the first day of the next Regular Session of the General Assembly for each

year. Each executive summary shall state whether the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission intends to submit to the General Assembly and the Governor a report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a House or Senate document. The executive summaries and reports shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

## Appendix B: Research activities and methods

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Key research activities performed by JLARC staff for this study included:

- structured interviews with local government representatives, nonprofit community-based organizations, hospitals, law enforcement, local business owners and business associations, individuals who have been directly impacted by gun violence in Virginia, state officials, and subject-matter experts in Virginia and nationally;
- site visits to Virginia localities most heavily impacted by community gun violence;
- analysis of public health data, including homicide data, claims data, and emergency department data;
- analysis of criminal justice data, including local- and state-level criminal incident and offense data, as well as law enforcement staffing data;
- analysis of education data, including survey data on school climate and working conditions, school and division safety data, chronic absenteeism and student behavior data, and teacher and staff vacancy data;
- review of research literature relevant to community gun violence and its effects on victims and families, community residents, school divisions, law enforcement, and the local economy;
- review of research literature on ways to address the impacts of community gun violence, including violence prevention programs, intervention programs, and law enforcement strategies; and
- review of other relevant laws, policies, reports, documents, literature, and media sources.

### Structured interviews

Structured interviews were a key research method for this report. JLARC staff conducted 123 interviews with 144 different stakeholders. Local representatives made up most of the stakeholders interviewed and were drawn from 122 different organizations. Of special note are the local lead offices for coordinating gun violence reduction in six localities, which provided expertise and helped arrange meetings with local stakeholders: the Hampton Office of Youth and Young Adult Opportunities, the Newport News Office of Community Safety, the Norfolk Department of Military and Community Affairs, Portsmouth United, the Richmond Office of Gun Violence Prevention, and Roanoke's Strategic Coordinator for the Office of the City Manager.

VCU's Health Injury and Violence Prevention Program was also a significant contributor to the report, providing extensive expertise and data on the health effects of gun violence, firearm injury costs, and the operation of hospital-based violence intervention programs.

### *Local government representatives*

JLARC staff conducted interviews with local government representatives from the nine Virginia localities that are most affected by gun violence. Interviewees varied by locality, but included individuals from:

- local lead offices for coordinating gun violence reduction efforts;
- city managers' offices;
- parks and recreation;
- public libraries;
- social services;
- housing authorities;
- local health district offices;
- community services boards;
- adult and juvenile community corrections; and
- school divisions.

The primary purpose of these interviews was to understand each locality's unique experience with community gun violence and local efforts to address it. The interviews covered a wide range of topics, including (1) characteristics and causes of community gun violence at the local level; (2) impacts of gun violence on the community and its residents; (3) programs and initiatives run by local governments to address the impacts of gun violence and prevent future violence; and (4) potential steps the state could take to better support local efforts.

Interviews with school divisions also focused on the specific impacts stemming from teaching and supporting students, teachers, and staff living and working in areas impacted by gun violence, as well as steps taken by the division to address these impacts.

### ***Nonprofit community-based organizations (CBOs)***

JLARC staff conducted interviews with nearly 30 nonprofit community-based organizations (CBOs) across the higher gun violence localities. Each locality partners with several CBOs to engage in gun violence prevention, intervention, and response activities. Because these organizations and their programs can vary widely, the purpose of these interviews was to understand each organization's role in addressing community gun violence within their locality, including (1) the organization's mission and goals; (2) the programs and services provided; (3) the target population for each program/service; and (4) the theory of change for how the programs and services are intended to prevent or address gun violence. JLARC staff also spoke with CBOs about the nature of community gun violence within their locality, as well as the specific impacts of gun violence on the community based on their personal experiences and their clients' experiences.

### ***Hospital-based violence intervention programs (HVIPs)***

JLARC staff conducted seven interviews with staff from four different hospital-based violence intervention programs (HVIPs) across the commonwealth, as well as one interview with the Virginia Hospital and Healthcare Association (VHHA) staff who administer state grant funds for HVIPs. The purpose of the interviews with the HVIPs was to better understand the structure and staffing of each program, the patient population each program services, the services they provide, and the effectiveness of the program related to reducing violence and mitigating the impacts of gun violence on victims and families. JLARC staff also spoke with HVIP staff about the physical and mental health impacts of gun violence on the patients they serve, as well as the needs of patients in their programs.

JLARC staff discussed similar topics with VHHA representatives but also discussed the research basis for the HVIP model broadly and the association's role in supporting HVIPs throughout Virginia. VCU's Health Injury and Violence Prevention Program provided extensive information on these subjects as well as information on the role it plays in training other HVIPs across the state and firearm injury costs.

### ***Law enforcement***

JLARC staff conducted 15 interviews with police departments and commonwealth's attorney offices across the higher gun violence localities. Police department interviews covered a range of topics, including the impacts of gun violence on resources and staffing, officer physical and mental health, and community relations and perceptions of law enforcement. Interviews with commonwealth's attorney offices focused on prosecutors' roles in addressing community gun violence, state laws related to prosecuting gun crimes, and the impacts of gun violence on resources and staffing. Interviews with both police chiefs and commonwealth's attorneys also covered trends in community gun violence within their locality, as well as challenges experienced in investigating and prosecuting incidents of community gun violence.

### ***Local businesses and business associations***

JLARC staff conducted 15 interviews with business owners in higher gun violence localities and business associations representing higher gun violence localities or regions. Interviews focused on local violent crime concerns and the effects that gun violence, and crime in general, have on individual businesses, commercial districts, and the locality or region. The effects discussed ranged from effects on day-to-day business operations to effects on future investment decisions, such as whether to expand an existing business or open a new business. Interviews also discussed factors that contribute to gun violence, crime, and perceptions of the neighborhoods and localities where businesses are located. Interviews also discussed business and association perspectives on what they and local governments are or should be doing to address the identified problems.

### ***State agencies***

JLARC staff conducted interviews with multiple state agencies, including the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), the Virginia Department of Health (VDH), Virginia State Police (VSP), the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Office of the Attorney General, and the secretary of public safety and homeland security. Interviews with state agencies and the secretary covered the state's role in addressing community gun violence, current initiatives related to gun violence (e.g., Safer Communities, Operation Ceasefire, etc.), and available data collected and maintained by state agencies on gun violence incidents.

### ***Subject-matter experts***

JLARC staff conducted over 10 interviews with researchers and subject matter experts who study gun violence and its effects, including individuals from the RAND Gun Policy in America Project, Johns Hopkins School of Public Health Center for Gun Violence Solutions, Giffords Center for Violence Intervention, University of Maryland Center for the Study and Practice of Violence Reduction,

Virginia Commonwealth University Injury and Violence Prevention Program, George Mason University, Duke University, and the National Alliance of Trauma Recovery Centers. Interviews covered a variety of topics but were generally focused on availability and strength of research examining the impacts of community gun violence and ways to address those impacts.

### **Site visits**

As part of conducting structured interviews, the team visited several localities with high rates of gun violence, including Norfolk, Portsmouth, Richmond, and Roanoke. These specific localities were selected because they are currently the four recipients of DCJS Safer Communities grant funding. During these visits, the team conducted many of its interviews with local government representatives, community-based organizations, police departments, and local businesses. In addition to interviews, JLARC staff also interacted with community stakeholders; attended local gun violence prevention steering committee meetings; rode along with police and visited neighborhoods and downtown entertainment districts to see areas of the community impacted by gun violence; and observed youth violence prevention programming. In addition to site visits to these four localities, the team interviewed key stakeholders from the five other higher gun violence localities (Danville, Hampton, Hopewell, Newport News, and Petersburg).

### **Data collection and analysis**

JLARC staff collected and analyzed data from multiple sources as part of this study.

#### ***Identification of higher gun violence localities***

The nine higher gun violence localities were identified using three sets of data: VDH gun-related homicides from medical examiner data, VSP gun-related murders and nonnegligent manslaughters from incident-based reporting data, and all VSP gun-related criminal incidents from incident-based reporting data. (Additional discussion of each of the source datasets are provided below.)

To identify the higher gun violence localities, JLARC staff performed the following steps.

- First, staff identified the localities with the highest gun-related homicide/murder rates in the state. Gun-related homicides/murders were the leading indicator of interest because, across a period of several years, they are the strongest indicator of the overall level of gun violence occurring in a locality. Gun-related homicides/murders have the greatest impact on individuals and communities and are the most consistently captured and reported gun violence metric across localities. Localities with exceptionally high rates of gun-related homicides/murders were of the most interest to this study because they are most likely to have the highest levels of *community* gun violence.
- Second, JLARC staff filtered the list to include only localities that averaged at least five gun-related homicides/murders per year for the five-year period from 2020–2024 (the most recent period available). The most recent five-year period was used to capture localities that have a current gun violence issue. A minimum threshold of five homicides/murders per year was set because relying on homicide/murder rates alone can make it appear that localities with small populations have severe gun violence issues. For example, several

localities averaged less than two gun-related homicides/murders per year but, because of their small populations, this translated into high gun-related homicide/murder rates for those localities. The high gun-related homicide/murder rates in these small localities overstated the scope of the issue that these localities are encountering relative to larger localities with many more homicides/murders per year.

- Third, JLARC staff identified and compared the localities with highest rates for *all* gun-related criminal incidents, including violent crimes as well as incidents of illegal firearm possession, brandishing, etc. This broader measure was included because it helps provide the full-scope of gun-related crimes. However, it was used as a secondary measure because research indicates many crimes, other than homicides/murders, are not reliably reported, and enforcement can vary across localities. Consequently, this data could overstate incidents in some localities and understate incidents in others. Therefore, it was not considered reliable enough to be used as the primary indicator.

The three-step approach resulted in the identification of nine higher gun violence localities: Danville, Hampton, Hopewell, Newport News, Norfolk, Petersburg, Portsmouth, Richmond, and Roanoke. Of the nine, Danville had the lowest annual average number of gun-related homicides (average of 5.4 homicides per year) and the lowest gun-related homicide rate (12.8 homicides per 100,000 residents). The three localities with the next highest homicide rates, and which also met the minimum five homicides per year threshold, were Henry County (average 5.2 homicides per year and a 10.4 homicide rate), Suffolk (8.2 homicides and 8.2 homicide rate), and Lynchburg (6.0 homicides and 7.6 homicide rate). While the homicide numbers make a case for including these three localities in the higher gun violence localities list, they were not included because they had relatively lower rates of *all* gun-related criminal incidents. This secondary measure suggests that they have relatively lower levels of community gun violence than the nine localities that were included. For example, Danville's rate of *all* gun-related criminal incidents was 5.1 per 1,000 residents, which was 50–96 percent higher than Henry County (2.7 per 1,000 residents), Suffolk (2.6), and Lynchburg (3.4). For more information on incidence and rates of firearm-related violence by locality, see Appendix C.

### ***Centers for Disease Control (CDC) mortality data (Chapter 1)***

JLARC staff analyzed data collected by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) National Vital Statistics System on all causes of death in Virginia and all other U.S. states, including gun-related deaths. All states report mortality data to the CDC, and Virginia data is reported by the VDH Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. Data was used to compare Virginia's gun-related deaths to gun-related deaths in all other states from 2019–2023 (the most recent year available), including all gun-related homicides, suicides, and accidental deaths. Death rates were calculated based on state population. Data from 2019–2023 was also used to determine the leading causes of death in Virginia and nationally, including the number of deaths that were gun-related, the number that were gun-related homicides, and the number of deaths from other causes (e.g., motor vehicle accidents, disease). Staff performed additional analysis of how leading causes of death differed by demographic groups (age, gender, race).

***VDH mortality and injury data (Chapter 1)***

JLARC staff analyzed data collected by VDH's Office of the Chief Medical Examiner on gun-related deaths in Virginia, including all gun-related homicides, suicides, and accidental deaths. The medical examiner is responsible for investigating unnatural deaths occurring in the state. Data from the VDH Medical Examiner Data System for 2010–2024 was used to examine state trends in gun-related deaths over time, by category (homicide, suicide accidental), demographic (age, gender, race), and locality. Analyses included calculation of death rates, by category, using U.S. Census population data. Locality-level homicide counts and rates were one of the key factors used to identify the nine higher gun violence localities, with a focus on counts and rates in the last five years (2019–2024).

More detailed data from the VDH Virginia Violent Death Reporting System (VVDRS) for 2003–2022 (the most recent year available) was used to perform several additional analyses. VVDRS collects additional information on violent deaths, including gun-related deaths, from law enforcement and medical examiner reports. JLARC staff analyses of VVDRS focused on trends in the nine higher gun violence localities compared to the rest of the state, during the most recent five-year period of data available (2018–2022). Analyses examined where homicides occurred (e.g., at home, motor vehicle, street), relationships between shooters and victims (e.g., intimate partner, other), circumstances related to the homicide (e.g., argument, criminal activity), and number and percentage of incidents classified as justifiable self-defense. For the nine higher gun violence localities, data was used to determine the census tracts within each locality where homicides occurred most frequently. Statewide, data was used to examine the number and proportion of school homicides and mass homicides (incidents involving three or more homicide victims). Data was also used to examine trends in the types of guns used in gun-related homicides.

JLARC staff analyzed data collected by VDH's Office of Epidemiology on gun-related injuries. This data is collected as part of VDH's syndromic surveillance of emergency departments and urgent care centers to identify emerging trends of public health concern. Data was used to identify statewide trends in gun-related injuries that resulted in treatment in an emergency department from 2010–2024. Unlike other data sources, this data does not reliably distinguish between injuries related to interpersonal violence, self-harm, or accidents.

***VSP incident-based reporting data (Chapters 1 and 3)***

JLARC staff analyzed historical firearm-related criminal incident data to determine the prevalence and characteristics of firearm-related incidents in Virginia over time. The team received data from the Virginia Incident-Based Reporting Database from the Virginia State Police. The dataset included data on the incident date, locality, offense type (e.g., assault, robbery), type of weapon (e.g., handgun, rifle), and various offender and victim demographic information (e.g., age, gender, race). The dataset included all incidents in which a firearm was coded as the weapon type from 2010 through 2024.

JLARC staff first used this data to analyze variation in the rate of firearm-related incidents in localities across the state. The team assessed both total incidents and incidents by offense type for each locality across the 15-year period relative to total population (from U.S. Census data) to determine the rate of firearm-related offenses over time. These rates were then used to identify localities in the state with

the highest incidence of gun violence to narrow down which specific localities would be the focus of more in-depth analysis as part of this study.

JLARC staff also used this data to conduct descriptive analysis of firearm-related incidents at both the state and local level during this period. Staff analyzed the number and proportion of incidents by offense type, firearm type, victim age, victim gender, victim race, victim ethnicity, offender age, offender gender, offender race, and offender ethnicity. The team also analyzed several crosstabulations of different variables, such as firearm type by offense type; victim demographics by offense type; and offender demographics by offense type.

JLARC staff also reviewed data for offenses not involving a firearm to determine the proportion of offenses committed with a firearm, both statewide and at the local level. Staff downloaded data from VSP's online incident-based reporting database on offenses committed with a firearm vs. another type of weapon or no weapon by locality from 2009 to 2023 (the most recent 15-year period available). Staff then determined the proportion of firearm-related offenses by offense type for each locality over the 15-year period.

Finally, JLARC staff also utilized VSP firearm-related incident data to identify the number of law enforcement officers who are victims of firearm-related crimes and the extent of their injuries for Chapter 3. The dataset included fields specifying whether a law enforcement officer was the victim of the incident, officer assignment (e.g., detective, one-officer vehicle), officer activity type (e.g., traffic pursuits and stops, responding to disturbance call), and high-level information about injury type. The team used this information to provide additional context about the frequency and severity of law enforcement officer injuries from gun violence.

### ***Federal Bureau of Investigations data (Chapter 1)***

JLARC staff analyzed national Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) incident-based reporting data on firearm-related incidents to compare the prevalence of gun violence in Virginia to other states. The team downloaded state-level data from the FBI's Crime Data Explorer from 2019 to 2023 (most recent five years available) on total violent offenses and number of violent offenses committed with a firearm. Using U.S. Census population data, staff calculated the average rate of violent firearm-related offenses per 100,000 residents over the five-year period by state to compare Virginia's rate to other states.

FBI incident-based data was also used to determine more recent rates of firearm-related offenses among higher gun violence localities in Virginia. Police chiefs reported during interviews in summer 2025 that firearm-related homicides were on track to be lower in 2025 than 2024. To confirm this, JLARC staff downloaded firearm-related homicide data by locality to compare year-to-date firearm homicides in 2024 to 2025.

JLARC staff also analyzed Federal Bureau of Investigations Uniform Crime Reporting Program expanded homicide data for Virginia from 1985–2024. Data was used to determine historical statewide trends and peaks in homicides and other violent crimes, as well as trends in gun-related homicides. Homicide and violent crime rates were calculated using U.S. Census population data.

***Virginia All-Payers Claims Database (Chapter 2)***

JLARC staff analyzed health care claims data from the Virginia Health Information (VHI) All Payers Claims Database (APCD) for services incurred between 2021 and 2024. The APCD contains the Medicaid, Medicare, and commercial insurance claims in Virginia, covering inpatient, outpatient, pharmacy, and professional service charges. This dataset does not include claims for the uninsured, individuals covered by federal employee health benefits, military personnel and their families covered by TRICARE, and those with ERISA self-insured insurance coverage. From the total APCD, VHI produced a dataset including claims data associated with a list of firearms-related International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision (ICD-10) codes for the timeframe specified; if a patient had any of these ICD-10 codes applied for a given episode (even if they weren't applied to every service billed), that episode was included in the data query. This dataset included 189,613 observations.

JLARC staff first analyzed this dataset to determine the costs associated with the first treatment spell for a firearm injury. To do so, staff created a sample population from the overall dataset that grouped individual claim records into patient spells based on the date services were incurred. Spells were categorized as “emergency department (ED) only” and “inpatient” to identify if the treatment spell included inpatient hospital admission. Once the sample was constructed, total costs were summed to the spell level for each patient in the dataset. Monthly inflation was adjusted using the first service data on the spell and the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Producer Price Index (PPI) industry subsector data for hospitals, not seasonally adjusted.

Next, JLARC staff analyzed the full APCD dataset provided by VHI to identify total firearm-related treatment costs by insurer type (Medicaid, Medicare, and commercial). Staff first identified the number of members included in the dataset covered by each insurer and then totaled the total amount paid by each insurer. Like patient spell costs, the total amount paid by each type of insurer was also adjusted to inflation using the BLS PPI subsector data for hospitals.

JLARC staff also analyzed the full dataset to determine how many individuals with firearm injuries required additional follow-up care after discharge from the hospital using the discharge disposition field. To do so, staff first identified patients with claims indicating they required inpatient admission and then staff identified the discharge disposition listed for each patient at the end of their first spell of treatment.

***DCJS School Survey of Climate and Working Conditions (Chapter 3)***

JLARC staff analyzed survey data from the DCJS School Survey of Climate and Working Conditions to compare perceptions of safety among teachers and staff in localities with higher rates of community gun violence to those in lower gun violence areas of the state. JLARC received survey data from DCJS for each year from 2021 to 2024, which included survey responses for middle and high school students, and elementary, middle, and high school teachers and staff. The team then analyzed responses for several survey questions to compare trends across school divisions with higher vs. lower rates of gun violence to help provide context around the extent to which community gun violence impacts teacher and support staff mental health and morale, as well as the need for additional instructional and other support services to address student needs.

***DCJS school and division safety surveys (Chapter 3)***

JLARC staff reviewed submissions from DCJS school and division safety surveys to gain a better understanding of school security measures. JLARC received school and divisions safety surveys from DCJS for each year from 2021 to 2024. The 2024 surveys included more detailed information about the number of school resource officers (SROs) and school security officers (SSOs) employed by the division, including the number of full-time and part-time positions employed at elementary, middle, and high schools; how positions were funded; whether officers were required to wear a uniform and whether they are allowed to be armed; and whether the division applied for DCJS grant funds to offset the cost of employing these personnel. The team used the information on the number of positions to analyze and compare the number of SROs and SSOs per 1,000 students (obtained via VDOE student population data) in higher gun violence divisions to other divisions in the state.

***Chronic absenteeism and student behavior data (Chapter 3)***

JLARC staff analyzed school division chronic absenteeism and student behavior data to provide additional context around attendance and behavior issues of students who are impacted by community gun violence that were highlighted during interviews with various stakeholders. The team downloaded student behavior and chronic absenteeism datasets from VDOE's website. Student behavior data was obtained for 2022–2024 (the most recent years available) and chronic absenteeism data was obtained from 2015–2024. For the student behavior data analysis, JLARC staff calculated the number of behavioral incidents per 100 students for each school division and compared the divisions in localities with higher rates of gun violence to other divisions in the state. The team also analyzed the proportion of each type of behavior incident (e.g., behaviors related to safety concerns, behaviors related to school operations, etc.). For the chronic absenteeism analysis, JLARC staff utilized the chronic absenteeism rates, as calculated by VDOE, to determine a five-year and three-year average rate for each school division. These rates were then compared across divisions with higher vs. lower rates of community gun violence to assess differences.

***Teacher and staff vacancy data (Chapter 3)***

JLARC staff also analyzed vacancy rates for teachers and various support staff positions to provide context around how community gun violence could be impacting recruitment and retention rates. The team downloaded VDOE staffing and vacancy data from 2021–22 through 2024–25 for teachers, administration, aides and paraprofessionals, non-instructional personnel, and transportation staff. JLARC staff then analyzed the number of positions and position vacancy rates for each position type by school division and compared vacancy rates across divisions with higher vs. lower rates of community gun violence to assess differences.

***Law enforcement staffing and vacancy data (Chapter 3)***

JLARC staff assessed staffing levels and vacancy rates for police departments across the state to provide context around how high levels of community gun violence impacts law enforcement staffing. The team received staffing data for local law enforcement agencies from VSP from 2010 to 2024, including authorized and filled positions (both full time and part time) for sworn officer and civilian staff. JLARC staff analyzed changes in the number of sworn officers and civilian staff over time by

law enforcement agency, as well as changes in vacancy rates for these positions. The team then compared staffing and vacancy rates for localities with high rates of community gun violence to other localities in the state.

This analysis was also used alongside VSP incident data to assess law enforcement workload. Using the data analysis on the number and rates of criminal incidents, JLARC staff determined a rate of firearm-related and non-firearm-related offenses per law enforcement officer in each locality. The resulting rates in localities with higher rates of community gun violence were then compared to rates in other localities to identify any trends in law enforcement officer workload.

## **Literature review**

JLARC staff conducted several literature reviews as part of this study, primarily to assess the existence and strength of available research literature pertaining to various impacts of community gun violence.

### ***Effects of state-level gun policies on community gun violence (Chapter 1)***

JLARC staff conducted a scan of the available research literature to identify articles that examined the effect of state-level gun policies on outcomes related to community gun violence (e.g., firearm homicides and assaults). Through this scan, the team identified the RAND Corporation's Gun Policy Research Review, a systematic review of evidence for the effects of 18 classes of state-level gun policies. These policies fell into three broader categories: (1) policies regulating who may legally own, purchase, or possess firearms (e.g., minimum age requirements, prohibitions associated with mental illness or domestic violence); (2) policies regulating firearm sales and transfers (e.g., background checks, licensing and permitting requirements, waiting periods); and (3) policies regulating legal use, storage, or carrying of firearms (e.g., child-access prevention laws, concealed carry laws, stand-your-ground laws). RAND evaluated the evidence of the effects of these policies on various outcomes, including suicide, unintentional injuries and death, mass shootings, police shootings, and violent crime. The team then reviewed RAND's synthesis of the evidence of the effects of each of these types of policies, with a particular focus on the effects of these policies on violent crime, including firearm homicides and assaults, as these outcomes are the most closely related to community gun violence. RAND's synthesis of the evidence related to these outcomes included findings from 138 research articles. The team also identified and reviewed 12 additional articles and reports related to the effects of state-level gun policies on outcomes related to community gun violence, separate from the RAND systematic review.

### ***Physical and mental health effects on victims and families (Chapter 2)***

JLARC staff conducted a scan of the available research literature to identify articles examining the impacts of community gun violence on the physical and mental health of victims and their families, including (1) the case fatality rates and comparative lethality of firearm injuries compared to other types of traumatic injuries; (2) the types and severity of non-fatal injuries that result from gun violence; (3) the initial treatment needs and costs associated with firearm injuries; (4) the long-term health consequences and health-care needs of victims of non-fatal firearm injuries; (5) the mental health effects associated with firearm injuries, including the impact to the mental health of injury survivors, their family members, and the family members of individuals killed by community gun violence; and (6) the extent to which individuals impacted by community gun violence face barriers to accessing and

engaging in behavioral health care. The team identified and reviewed approximately 60 articles and reports related to these topics.

### ***Social and health effects on community residents (Chapter 2)***

JLARC staff conducted a scan of the available research literature to identify research articles examining the impacts of community gun violence on the broader community, including the effect of pervasive community gun violence on (1) the mental health of residents who are not directly involved in gun violence incidents; (2) community members' perception of safety; and (3) the sense of community, connectedness, and engagement with other community members in impacted areas. The team then reviewed relevant articles looking at the relationship between exposure to community gun violence and youth mental health; community members' sense of safety; use of community spaces, like parks and community centers; social isolation; community unity and trust; and the role of indirect exposure to community gun violence in perpetuating future gun violence. The team identified and reviewed 20 articles and reports related to these topics.

### ***Economic impacts (Chapter 3)***

JLARC staff conducted a scan of the available research literature to identify articles examining the economic impacts of gun violence and violent crime, including (1) impacts on business activity for a wide variety of sectors, including broad studies of businesses across multiple sectors and studies that focused more on retail, food service, and arts and entertainment sectors; (2) impacts on residential and commercial property values; (3) its relationship with labor markets; and (4) cost impacts, including sources that attempt to estimate the cost of gun-related injuries and homicides using different methodologies. The team identified and reviewed 37 articles and reports related to these topics. The team also reviewed cost data available from the CDC Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System (WISQARS).

### ***School division impacts (Chapter 3)***

JLARC staff conducted a scan of available research literature to identify research articles examining the impacts of community gun violence on school divisions, including (1) the need for additional instructional and other support services to address student academic and mental health needs; (2) the impact on teacher and support staff recruitment, retention, mental health, and morale; and (3) the need for additional school security measures. The team then reviewed relevant articles looking at the relationship between community gun violence and student mental health; student attendance; student academic performance; long-term student outcomes, such as college enrollment, employment, and annual earnings; teacher recruitment; teacher mental health, burnout, job satisfaction, and retention; and school security measures. The team identified and reviewed over 20 articles and reports related to these topics.

### ***Law enforcement impacts (Chapter 3)***

JLARC staff also conducted a scan of available research literature to identify research articles examining the impacts of community gun violence on law enforcement, including (1) the impact on law enforcement officer recruitment, retention, and morale; (2) the impact on law enforcement officer

physical and mental health; and (3) the impact on community relations and community members' perception of law enforcement. The team then reviewed relevant articles looking at the relationship between community gun violence and officer mental health; officer job stress, burnout, and retention; community cooperation with police investigations; and community distrust and perceptions of law enforcement. The team identified and reviewed approximately 35 articles and reports related to these topics.

#### ***Violence prevention programs (Chapter 4)***

JLARC staff also conducted a scan of available research literature to identify research articles that examine prevention programs focused on reducing gun violence or changing behaviors (e.g., negative social behaviors, juvenile delinquency) that could lead to perpetration or victimization by violence. The review focused on studies of (1) afterschool programs for disadvantaged youth from high crime communities, (2) summer youth employment programs for disadvantaged youth from high crime communities, and (3) intensive mentorship-based prevention programs for high-risk youth (e.g., previous involvement in crime, concerning behaviors, directly affected by or involved in a gun violence incident), where behavior change was a key program element. The team then reviewed relevant articles looking at the theoretical basis for these programs; best practices and considerations for implementing these programs; and evaluations of the effectiveness of these programs in cities throughout the country. The team also reviewed meta-analyses of these types of programs and a few studies that more broadly examined the effectiveness of violence prevention approaches. The team identified and reviewed approximately 25 articles and reports related to these topics.

#### ***Violence intervention programs (Chapter 4)***

JLARC staff also conducted a scan of available research literature to identify research articles that examine programs intended to intervene at the individual and community level to interrupt cycles of violence. Through this review, staff identified articles related to several popular intervention programs, including violence interruption or street outreach programs, group violence intervention programs, and hospital-based violence intervention programs. The team then reviewed relevant articles looking at the theoretical basis for these programs; best practices and considerations for implementing these programs; and evaluations of the effectiveness of these programs in cities throughout the country. The team identified and reviewed approximately 40 articles and reports related to these topics.

#### **Document and policy review**

JLARC staff reviewed numerous other documents and policies pertaining to community gun violence, such as:

- Virginia statutes related to firearm purchasing and possession;
- national databases of firearm purchase and possession laws in other states;
- key federal laws and Supreme Court decisions related to firearm purchase and possession;
- Virginia statutes and mandatory minimums related to committing a crime with the use of a firearm;

- DCJS reports, policies, and webpages on state gun violence prevention and intervention grant award programs, including Safer Communities, Firearm Violence Intervention and Prevention, and Operation Ceasefire;
- summary documents from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives on crime gun tracing and the use of crime guns in Virginia;
- summary documents from the U.S. Marshals Service National Wellness Survey for Public Safety Personnel pertaining to the mental health of law enforcement officers in Virginia;
- reports, data, webpages, presentations, and other documents on the incidence of community gun violence, its causes, effects, and best practices for policies and programs intended to mitigate the effects or prevent additional violence; and
- local and national news media coverage of community gun violence incidents.

## Appendix C: Firearm-related violence by locality

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This appendix provides information on firearm-related violence, by locality, that was used to identify the higher gun violence localities that were the focus of this study. Three data sets were used to complete this analysis, with the results presented in Table C-1.

- Virginia Department of Health (VDH) firearm-related homicides from the Virginia Medical Examiner Data System: this dataset consisted of all homicides committed with a firearm that occurred in each locality from 2020 to 2024, including justifiable homicides.
- Virginia State Police (VSP) firearm-related murders and nonnegligent manslaughters from incident-based reporting data: this dataset consisted of all murders and nonnegligent manslaughters (defined as the willful killing of one human being by another and does not include justifiable homicides) committed with a firearm that occurred in each locality from 2020 to 2024.
- all VSP gun-related criminal incidents from incident-based reporting data: this dataset consisted of all firearm-related criminal incidents, including violent crimes as well as incidents of illegal firearm possession, brandishing, etc., that occurred in each locality from 2020 to 2024. Each incident can include one or more offenses. For example, a robbery committed with a stolen firearm would include offenses for the robbery as well as illegal firearm possession. Incident-level data was used for this analysis to avoid overcounting the firearm-related criminal activity occurring in each locality.

To identify the higher gun violence localities, JLARC staff (1) identified localities with the highest five-year-average rates of gun-related homicides/murders in the VDH and VSP data; (2) filtered data to include only localities that averaged at least five gun-related homicides/murders per year from 2020–2024; and (3) identified and compared localities with the highest rates for *all* gun-related criminal incidents to provide a full scope of gun-related crime. The nine localities that JLARC staff identified through this approach (Danville, Hampton, Hopewell, Newport News, Norfolk, Petersburg, Portsmouth, Richmond, and Roanoke city) are bolded in the table below for reference. For further methodological discussion of how these localities were selected, see Appendix B.

**TABLE C-1**  
**Incidence and rates of firearm-related violence in Virginia vary widely by locality (2020–2024)**

Locality	Homicide count (2020–2024 annual average)	Homicide rate (2020–2024 annual average per 100K residents)	Murder & nonnegligent manslaughter count (2020–2024 annual average)	Murder & nonnegligent manslaughter rate (2020–2024 annual average per 100K residents)	Total firearm-related criminal incident rate (2020–2024 annual average per 100K residents)
Accomack County	4	12.6	5	14.4	134.4
Albemarle County	3	2.8	3	2.3	83.7
Alexandria City	3	2.2	2	1.3	125.5
Alleghany County	0	1.4	1	5.4	188.5
Amelia County	1	5.9	1	4.5	157.7
Amherst County	1	4.4	1	2.5	116.3
Appomattox County	0	2.4	1	3.7	103.9
Arlington County	1	0.5	1	0.3	131.1
Augusta County	1	0.8	0	0.5	133.8
Bath County	0	0.0	0	0.0	142.0
Bedford County	1	1.7	1	1.0	113.3
Bland County	0	0.0	0	3.2	158.0
Botetourt County	0	1.2	0	1.2	147.0
Bristol City	1	3.5	1	3.5	531.0
Brunswick County	1	7.6	1	5.0	127.6
Buchanan County	1	3.0	1	4.1	192.3
Buckingham County	1	3.5	1	3.5	120.1
Buena Vista City	0	0.0	0	0.0	130.5
Campbell County	1	2.2	1	1.5	148.2
Caroline County	1	4.3	1	3.7	216.0
Carroll County	1	3.4	1	4.1	143.4
Charles City County	0	3.0	0	3.0	99.6
Charlotte County	0	0.0	0	0.0	106.9
Charlottesville City	4	7.9	3	5.7	182.0
Chesapeake City	16	6.3	15	5.8	263.5
Chesterfield County	12	3.1	9	2.5	205.5

Appendixes

Locality	Homicide count (2020–2024 annual average)	Homicide rate (2020–2024 annual average per 100K residents)	Murder & nonnegligent manslaughter count (2020–2024 annual average)	Murder & nonnegligent manslaughter rate (2020–2024 annual average per 100K residents)	Total firearm-related criminal incident rate (2020–2024 annual average per 100K residents)
Clarke County	0	0.0	0	0.0	51.4
Colonial Heights City	1	5.4	1	5.4	784.9
Covington City	1	17.6	1	10.5	186.6
Craig County	1	16.4	1	12.3	102.9
Culpeper County	1	2.6	1	1.8	129.7
Cumberland County	0	2.1	0	0.0	120.2
<b>Danville City</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>12.8</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>11.4</b>	<b>512.8</b>
Dickenson County	0	2.9	0	2.9	205.1
Dinwiddie County	2	6.4	1	3.6	119.9
Emporia City	2	28.7	2	28.8	484.2
Essex County	1	7.5	0	3.8	177.0
Fairfax City	0	1.6	0	0.8	66.6
Fairfax County	14	1.2	12	1.1	80.7
Falls Church City	0	1.4	0	1.4	66.5
Fauquier County	1	1.9	1	1.6	96.0
Floyd County	1	3.9	0	2.6	132.1
Fluvanna County	1	2.1	0	1.4	77.8
Franklin City	2	21.8	2	19.5	743.9
Franklin County	2	4.0	2	4.0	182.9
Frederick County	2	1.9	1	1.3	81.8
Fredericksburg City	2	6.2	2	5.6	373.7
Galax City	0	2.9	0	2.9	407.3
Giles County	1	6.0	1	4.8	182.5
Gloucester County	1	2.5	1	2.5	103.2
Goochland County	1	2.3	0	0.8	63.1
Grayson County	0	1.3	0	0.0	211.9
Greene County	0	1.9	0	1.9	153.5
Greensville County	1	10.7	2	14.2	171.8
Halifax County	3	8.3	3	7.7	217.1

Appendixes

Locality	Homicide count (2020–2024 annual average)	Homicide rate (2020–2024 annual average per 100K residents)	Murder & nonnegligent manslaughter count (2020–2024 annual average)	Murder & nonnegligent manslaughter rate (2020–2024 annual average per 100K residents)	Total firearm-related criminal incident rate (2020–2024 annual average per 100K residents)
<b>Hampton City</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>16.7</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>15.4</b>	<b>283.8</b>
Hanover County	1	1.1	1	0.7	208.1
Harrisonburg City	1	1.6	0	0.8	177.5
Henrico County	22	6.5	18	5.4	197.4
Henry County	5	10.4	5	10.0	264.9
Highland County	0	0.0	0	0.0	147.5
<b>Hopewell City</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>27.9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>22.7</b>	<b>461.7</b>
Isle Of Wight County	2	4.0	1	3.0	154.9
James City County	1	1.5	1	1.5	124.5
King and Queen County	0	0.0	0	0.0	150.1
King George County	1	2.2	0	1.5	139.3
King William County	0	1.0	0	2.1	129.0
Lancaster County	1	5.5	1	5.5	195.5
Lee County	1	4.6	0	1.8	211.0
Lexington City	0	0.0	0	0.0	84.9
Loudoun County	2	0.5	2	0.4	65.4
Louisa County	1	3.0	1	2.5	55.0
Lunenburg County	1	6.7	1	6.7	128.2
Lynchburg City	6	7.6	6	7.3	339.1
Madison County	1	4.3	1	4.3	112.6
Manassas City	0	0.9	1	1.4	204.7
Manassas Park City	0	2.4	0	2.4	110.2
Martinsville City	2	13.2	1	10.2	352.6
Mathews County	0	2.3	0	2.3	100.7
Mecklenburg County	4	12.4	4	11.8	131.1
Middlesex County	0	0.0	0	0.0	118.0
Montgomery County	2	1.6	1	0.8	151.7
Nelson County	0	1.4	0	1.4	218.7
New Kent County	0	0.8	0	0.8	181.2

Appendixes

Locality	Homicide count (2020–2024 annual average)	Homicide rate (2020–2024 annual average per 100K residents)	Murder & nonnegligent manslaughter count (2020–2024 annual average)	Murder & nonnegligent manslaughter rate (2020–2024 annual average per 100K residents)	Total firearm-related criminal incident rate (2020–2024 annual average per 100K residents)
<b>Newport News City</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>15.2</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>13.7</b>	<b>609.1</b>
<b>Norfolk City</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>19.6</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>18.2</b>	<b>356.3</b>
Northampton County	0	3.3	0	3.3	121.0
Northumberland County	0	3.3	0	3.2	117.2
Norton City	0	11.1	0	11.1	569.6
Nottoway County	1	6.4	1	3.8	139.8
Orange County	1	2.1	1	3.2	73.4
Page County	1	5.0	1	2.5	150.1
Patrick County	1	3.4	1	3.4	241.0
<b>Petersburg City</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>53.8</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>54.4</b>	<b>550.0</b>
Pittsylvania County	4	6.1	2	4.0	80.5
Poquoson City	0	0.0	0	0.0	134.3
<b>Portsmouth City</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>34.6</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>32.7</b>	<b>302.0</b>
Powhatan County	0	0.0	0	0.0	111.4
Prince Edward County	1	5.5	1	3.6	129.9
Prince George County	2	4.6	2	4.2	279.0
Prince William County	15	3.1	12	2.4	143.7
Pulaski County	1	3.6	1	3.6	213.1
Radford City	0	0.0	0	0.0	208.2
Rappahannock County	0	2.7	0	0.0	166.8
<b>Richmond City</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>30.5</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>25.7</b>	<b>299.7</b>
Richmond County	1	8.8	0	4.4	103.1
<b>Roanoke City</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17.7</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15.1</b>	<b>400.7</b>
Roanoke County	2	2.3	1	1.2	179.3
Rockbridge County	1	2.7	0	1.8	221.0
Rockingham County	2	2.6	1	1.2	70.6
Russell County	1	3.1	1	5.5	208.4
Salem City	0	1.6	0	1.6	171.1
Scott County	1	3.7	0	1.9	266.1

Appendixes

Locality	Homicide count (2020–2024 annual average)	Homicide rate (2020–2024 annual average per 100K residents)	Murder & nonnegligent manslaughter count (2020–2024 annual average)	Murder & nonnegligent manslaughter rate (2020–2024 annual average per 100K residents)	Total firearm-related criminal incident rate (2020–2024 annual average per 100K residents)
Shenandoah County	1	2.2	0	0.9	158.8
Smyth County	2	6.1	1	4.8	168.0
Southampton County	0	2.2	1	4.5	132.5
Spotsylvania County	3	2.2	2	1.4	94.3
Stafford County	3	1.6	2	1.4	175.7
Staunton City	0	1.5	0	1.5	182.2
Suffolk City	8	8.2	8	7.8	262.5
Surry County	0	0.0	0	0.0	70.2
Sussex County	1	7.5	1	9.3	91.1
Tazewell County	1	2.0	1	2.5	260.7
Virginia Beach City	17	3.6	15	3.2	185.5
Warren County	0	0.5	0	0.0	163.4
Washington County	2	3.7	1	2.6	184.7
Waynesboro City	1	2.6	1	2.6	198.5
Westmoreland County	1	4.3	1	6.4	155.4
Williamsburg City	0	1.2	0	1.2	240.7
Winchester City	1	3.6	1	2.9	238.7
Wise County	1	2.8	0	1.1	219.9
Wythe County	1	3.6	1	3.5	158.9
York County	2	2.3	1	1.7	141.0

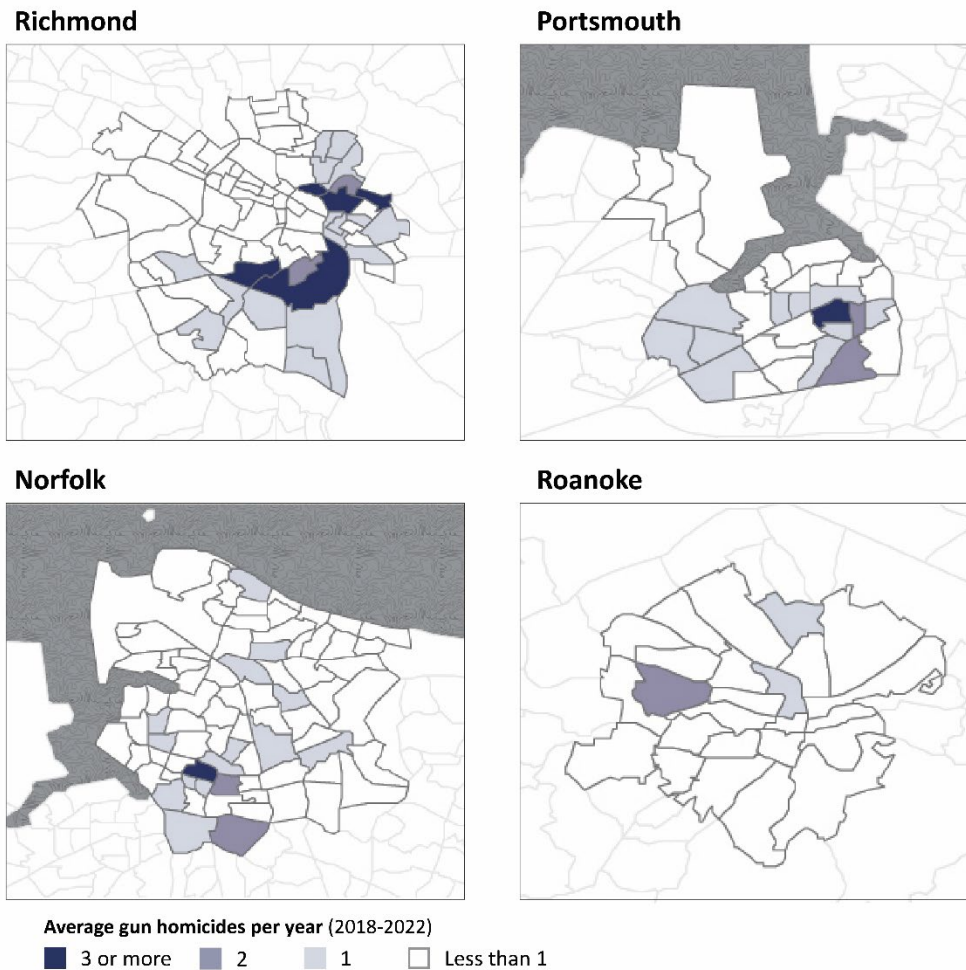
SOURCE: JLARC staff analysis of VDH Virginia Medical Examiner System (VMEDS) data and VSP incident-based reporting data, 2020–2024.

NOTE: Average homicide and murder counts are rounded to the nearest whole number. Homicide and murder counts may not match a given locality because they are pulled from different data sources and have different definitions. For example, VDH data includes justifiable homicides, while VSP data does not.

## Appendix D: Concentration of gun-related homicides in higher gun violence localities

JLARC staff analyzed data from VDH’s Virginia Violent Death Reporting System to investigate the concentration of gun-related homicides in the nine higher gun violence localities identified in Chapter 1. Using data from 2018 to 2022, JLARC staff calculated the five-year average of gun-related homicides per census tract for each locality. The data was plotted using GIS mapping software to show where gun-related homicides were most frequent. JLARC staff’s analysis found that, within each of the nine higher gun violence localities, shootings are concentrated in and around a few census tracts, with some areas averaging three or more gun-related homicides annually. For each gun-related homicide, there are several more shootings where someone is injured or shot at but not hit, meaning that these areas experience even more gun violence than the homicide data indicates.

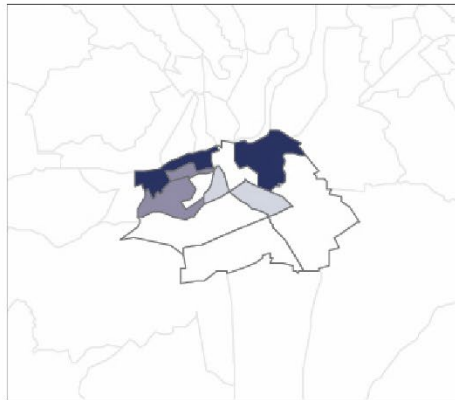
**FIGURE D-1**  
Concentration of gun-related homicides in nine higher gun violence localities



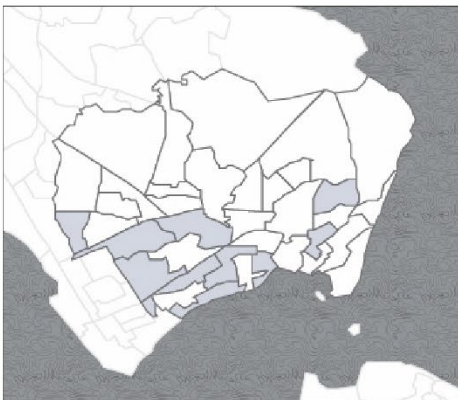
**Hopewell**



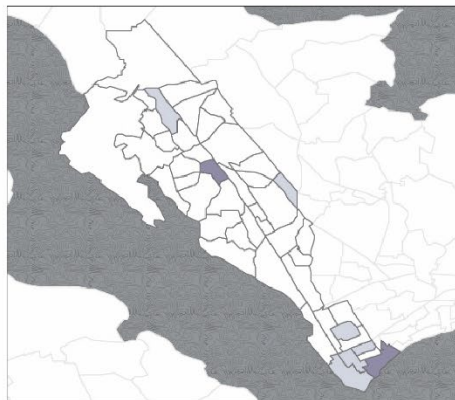
**Petersburg**



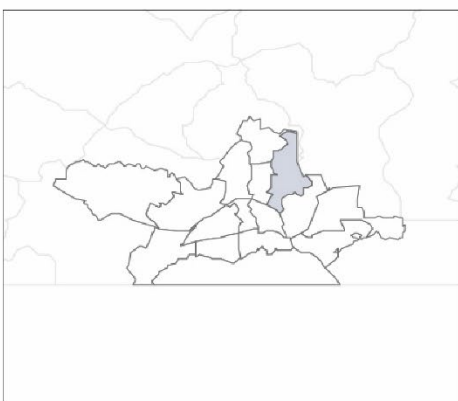
**Hampton**



**Newport News**



**Danville**



**Average gun homicides per year (2018-2022)**

- 3 or more
- 2
- 1
- Less than 1

SOURCE: JLARC staff analysis of Virginia Violent Death Reporting System data, 2018–2022.

## Appendix E: State funding programs for addressing gun violence

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Although most community gun violence programs are implemented at the local level, the state is a valuable partner, particularly through funding. Through the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), the state provided one-time funding to a few localities for gun violence intervention and prevention in 2020–2021. In 2022, it established more permanent programs specifically dedicated to mitigating gun violence: the Firearm Violence Intervention and Prevention (FVIP) Fund and the Operation Ceasefire Grant Fund. In 2023, it established a third program: the Safer Communities Program. All three programs are administered by DCJS under its Office of Safer Communities (established 2023). DCJS issues solicitations for the two grant programs (FVIP and Operation Ceasefire), provides technical assistance to grantees, and monitors grant funds. It also distributes Safer Communities funding to the designated localities, provides support and assistance to local coordinators, and monitors funding drawdowns and use. Since 2020, DCJS has made over 200 grant awards and funding disbursements to local governments and nonprofit community-based organizations (CBOs). This appendix provides an overview of the DCJS-administered programs, their appropriation history, and funding recipients and amounts.

FVIP and Operation Ceasefire are largely competitive grant programs, while Safer Communities is earmarked for specific localities. FVIP and Operation Ceasefire funds are held in special non-reverting accounts and administered by DCJS. DCJS holds regular calls for grant applications and awards funds to qualified applicants such as local government departments, commonwealth’s attorney offices, and CBOs. To receive money, an applicant must (1) qualify to apply and (2) compete for available funds against other applicants in each grant cycle. In contrast, Safer Communities funding is earmarked for specific localities and can be drawn down as localities are ready to use it. However, Safer Communities funding is *not* held in a special non-reverting fund and reverts back to the state general fund if it is not used by the end of the fiscal year.

This appendix focuses on DCJS-administered programs specifically designated for addressing gun violence. However, there are several other state funding sources that may help to address community gun violence but that are not specifically for that purpose. For example, DCJS distributes state aid to localities with police departments, known as “599” funds (\$230 million in FY26). The state also provides funding to localities for community-based juvenile justice programs under the Virginia Juvenile Community Crime Control Act (\$10.4 million in FY26), as well as some grant funding to school divisions for increased security measures and security personnel, including security equipment and capital improvements (\$12 million in FY26). Localities also receive other state funding that may be used to support gun violence reduction efforts, such as funding for community services boards. The Office of the Attorney General (OAG) also operates its own initiatives and received appropriations of \$1.3 million in FY25 and \$1.3 million in FY26 for gun violence reduction efforts.

### Past gun violence intervention and prevention funding

Prior to the establishment of the three current DCJS-administered programs, the General Assembly appropriated \$3,788,902 to localities for gun violence intervention and prevention efforts (FY21–FY22). The majority of these funds were distributed through grant awards of approximately \$500,000 each to Hampton, Newport News, Portsmouth, Richmond, and Roanoke city, with an additional \$800,000 appropriated to Hampton from the federal American Rescue Plan Act funds that were provided to the state. Appropriation amounts are presented in Table E-1. Funding recipients and amounts are presented in Table E-2.

**Table E-1**  
**Past gun violence intervention and prevention appropriations**

Appropriation Act(s)	Funding purpose	Appropriation amounts		
		FY21	FY22	Total
2020 Special Session I	Community assessments for youth and gang violence prevention initiatives in Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, Richmond, Roanoke city, and Petersburg	\$150,000	-	\$150,000
2020 Special Session I	Competitive grants to five localities to support evidence-based gun violence intervention and prevention initiatives	\$2,645,244	\$193,658	\$2,838,902
2021 Special Session II (American Rescue Plan Act funds)	One-time grant to Hampton to support employment program for court-involved youths and adults facing barriers to employment, expand services for those participating in or at risk of participating in gun violence, and provide counseling or mental health services for those exposed to violence	-	\$800,000	\$800,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$2,795,244</b>	<b>\$993,658</b>	<b>\$3,788,902</b>

SOURCE: JLARC staff review of appropriation acts.

**Table E-2**  
**Past gun violence intervention and prevention fund awards and disbursements**

Recipient	Recipient type	Funding type	Purpose	Funding period	Funding amount
Hampton Newport News Norfolk Petersburg Richmond Roanoke city	Local government	Earmark	Fund community assessments for violence prevention initiatives	FY21	\$150,000
Hampton	Local government	Earmark	Support youth employment, intensive prevention, and trauma counseling programs	FY22	\$800,000
Hampton	Local government	Grant	Establish lead office functions, such as case management, and violence interrupter and intensive prevention programs	FY22–23	\$500,000
Newport News	Local government	Grant	Establish mini-grant program for CBOs performing violence reduction work and fund law enforcement efforts (RRTC, community engagement)	FY22–23	\$500,000
Portsmouth	Local government	Grant	Implement media campaign, establish violence interrupter programs, support CBOs performing violence reduction work, and fund law enforcement efforts (community engagement, other)	FY22–23	\$495,394
Richmond	Local government	Grant	Establish intensive prevention program	FY22–23	\$500,000
Roanoke city	Local government	Grant	Support expansion of intensive prevention program and afterschool programs, support CBOs performing violence reduction work	FY22–23	\$500,000

SOURCE: DCJS reports to the General Assembly and JLARC staff review of appropriation acts.

## **Firearm Violence Intervention and Prevention Fund**

The Virginia Firearm Violence Intervention and Prevention (FVIP) Fund was established by the 2022 General Assembly to replace and expand prior funding initiatives, alongside the Operation Ceasefire program. FVIP funds are held in a non-reverting special fund and, with the exception of “earmarked” funds for Norfolk and Portsmouth, are made available to qualifying applicants through recurring rounds of grant application calls. FVIP grants are available to state agencies, local governments, CBOs, and hospitals, and can be used for (1) street outreach, (2) hospital-based violence intervention programs (HVIPs), and (3) other violence intervention programs (i.e., suicide prevention and safe removal practices from individuals prohibited from possessing a firearm). Grant award decisions are made by the Criminal Justice Services Board (CJSB), which is the policy board for DCJS and includes representatives from the legislature, state public safety agencies, judicial agencies, and gubernatorial appointments.

Since it was established, the General Assembly has appropriated \$31 million to the non-reverting FVIP fund. FVIP has awarded five rounds of competitive grants, two rounds of grants for HVIPs, and distributed two portions of earmarked funds for Norfolk and Portsmouth. Of the almost \$22 million in funds awarded or distributed as of December 1, 2025, 62 percent went to HVIPs, 21 percent to local governments (including 2 percent directly to local law enforcement agencies), 9 percent to nonprofit CBOs, and 8 percent to local redevelopment and housing authorities. FVIP funds for hospitals support their intervention work, and earmarked funds for Norfolk and Portsmouth have largely gone to police or community violence intervention initiatives. The remainder of the funds, awarded as competitive grants to local departments and CBOs from across the state, have gone toward implementing a wide range of programs and initiatives, such as conflict resolution and critical thinking skills for youth and families; afterschool programming for youth; behavioral health supports, including cognitive behavioral therapy; parenting classes; and job preparation and coaching skills.

FVIP appropriation amounts are presented in Table E-3. Funding recipients and amounts are presented in Table E-4. The most recent fifth round of grants was awarded on December 8, 2025, but those grants are not captured here because they were not available at the time of publication.

**Table E-3**  
**Firearm Violence Intervention and Prevention Fund appropriations**

Appropriation Act(s)	Funding Program	<u>Appropriation amounts</u>				Total
		FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26	
2022 Special Session I	FVIP	\$4,000,000	\$4,000,000	-	-	\$13,000,000
2023 Special Session I			\$9,000,000			
2024 Special Session I	FVIP	-	-	\$9,000,000 <sup>a</sup>	\$9,000,000 <sup>a</sup>	\$18,000,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$4,000,000</b>	<b>\$9,000,000</b>	<b>\$9,000,000</b>	<b>\$9,000,000</b>	<b>\$31,000,000</b>

SOURCE: JLARC staff review of appropriation acts.

NOTE: <sup>a</sup> The 2025 Appropriation Act passed by the General Assembly increased FVIP funding to \$9,350,000 in FY25 and \$9,500,000 in FY26, but this funding increase was vetoed by the governor. The funding would have provided \$350,000 in one-time funds to Newport News' VICTOR violence interrupter program and \$2,000,000 in one-time funds to Chesapeake for allowable equipment associated with a Real Time Crime Information Center.

**Table E-4**  
**Firearm Violence Intervention and Prevention Fund recipients**

Recipient	Recipient type	Recipient locality <sup>a</sup>	Purpose	Funding period	Funding amount
<b>Competitive Grants Round 1</b> (awarded June 2023)					
Boys and Girls Club of Northern Neck	Nonprofit	Northumberland County	Support community-based violence prevention and intervention activities	FY24	\$99,587
League of Advocates	Nonprofit	Chesapeake City	Support community-based violence prevention and intervention activities	FY24	\$25,000
Life Coach Academy	Nonprofit	Richmond City	Support community-based violence prevention and intervention activities	FY24	\$25,000
Pretty Purposed	Nonprofit	Petersburg City	Support community-based violence prevention and intervention activities to build relationships and leadership among girl-centered organizations.	FY24	\$25,000

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Recipient	Recipient type	Recipient locality <sup>a</sup>	Purpose	Funding period	Funding amount
Quality of Life Counseling Center	Nonprofit	Hampton City	Support community-based violence prevention and intervention activities	FY24	\$25,000
<b>Competitive Grants Round 2</b> (awarded December 2023)					
Alexandria City Manager	Local government	Alexandria City	Support hiring a local FVIP coordinator	CY24–FY26 (2.5 year)	\$250,000
Colonial Heights Police Department	Local government	Colonial Heights City	Support hiring a local FVIP coordinator	CY24–FY26 (2.5 year)	\$155,906
Emporia Police Department	Local government	Emporia City	Support hiring a local FVIP coordinator	CY24–FY26 (2.5 year)	\$200,000
Petersburg Police Department	Local government	Petersburg City	Support hiring a local FVIP coordinator	CY24–FY26 (2.5 year)	\$172,344
Richmond Department of Justice Services	Local government	Richmond City	Local assessment and planning	CY24–FY26 (2.5 year)	\$12,075
Roanoke City Manager’s Office	Local government	Roanoke City	Support hiring a local FVIP coordinator	CY24–FY26 (2.5 year)	\$223,083
<b>Competitive Grants Round 3</b> (awarded June 2024)					
Boy and Girls Club of Northumberland	Nonprofit	Northumberland County	Support community-based violence prevention and intervention activities	FY25–26	\$49,530
Boys and Girls Club of Northern Neck	Nonprofit	Northumberland County	Support community-based violence prevention and intervention activities	FY25–26	\$49,000
Center for Youth and Family Advocacy	Nonprofit	Arlington County	Support community-based violence prevention and intervention activities	FY25–26	\$128,548
Danville City Office of Violence Prevention	Local government	Danville City	Support community-based violence prevention and intervention activities	FY25–26	\$142,000
Hopegiver USA	Nonprofit	Richmond City	Support community-based violence prevention and intervention activities	FY25–26	\$75,000
Ketchmore Kids	Nonprofit	Newport News City	Support community-based violence prevention and intervention activities	FY25–26	\$200,000
King William County Juvenile Services	Local government	King William County	Support community-based violence prevention and intervention activities	FY25–26	\$226,390
M.A.Y.A. Foundation	Nonprofit	Richmond City	Support community-based violence prevention and intervention activities	FY25–26	\$50,000
New Life Community Center	Nonprofit	Richmond City	Support community-based violence prevention and intervention activities	FY25–26	\$59,381

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Recipient	Recipient type	Recipient locality <sup>a</sup>	Purpose	Funding period	Funding amount
Pretty Purposed	Nonprofit	Petersburg City	Support community-based violence prevention and intervention activities	FY25–26	\$49,885
Reck League	Nonprofit	Norfolk City	Support community-based violence prevention and intervention activities	FY25–26	\$100,000
Rings vs. Rent Scholarship Program	Nonprofit	New Kent County	Support community-based violence prevention and intervention activities	FY25–26	\$154,000
Roanoke City Manager’s Office	Local government	Roanoke City	Support community-based violence prevention and intervention activities	FY25–26	\$250,000
St. Luke Legacy Center Foundation	Nonprofit	Richmond City	Support community-based violence prevention and intervention activities	FY25–26	\$107,990
Stop the Violence 757	Nonprofit	Portsmouth City	Support community-based violence prevention and intervention activities	FY25–26	\$176,000
Sustain Equity Group	Nonprofit	Newport News City	Support community-based violence prevention and intervention activities	FY25–26	\$80,000
The Broken Men Foundation	Nonprofit	Richmond City	Support community-based violence prevention and intervention activities	FY25–26	\$250,000
The Buck Squad	Nonprofit	Charlottesville City	Support community-based violence prevention and intervention activities	FY25–26	\$50,000
The University of Lynchburg	Higher ed (private)	Lynchburg City	Support community-based violence prevention and intervention activities	FY25–26	\$200,000
Today’s Jesus	Nonprofit	Newport News City	Support community-based violence prevention and intervention activities	FY25–26	\$50,000
<b>Competitive Grants Round 4</b> (awarded June 2025)					
Charlottesville Redevelopment and Housing Authority (RHA)	Local RHA	Charlottesville City	n/a	FY26–27	\$298,502
City of Roanoke RHA	Local RHA	Roanoke City	n/a	FY26–27	\$299,916
Danville Redevelopment RHA	Local RHA	Danville City	n/a	FY26–27	\$282,810
Hopewell RHA	Local RHA	Hopewell City	n/a	FY26–27	\$300,000
Newport News RHA	Local RHA	Newport News City	n/a	FY26–27	\$299,076
Norfolk RHA	Local RHA	Norfolk City	n/a	FY26–27	\$300,000

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Recipient	Recipient type	Recipient locality <sup>a</sup>	Purpose	Funding period	Funding amount
<b>Competitive Grants Round 5</b> (awarded December 2025)					
Data not available as of publication					
<b>Hospital-Based Violence Intervention Programs (HVIP) Round 1</b> (awarded December 2022)					
Virginia Hospital Research and Education Foundation	Hospitals	Statewide	Support HVIPs in six Virginia hospitals	FY24–FY25	\$5,000,000
<b>Hospital-Based Violence Intervention Programs (HVIP) Round 2</b> (awarded June 2025)					
Virginia Hospital Research and Education Foundation	Hospitals	Statewide	Continue to support HVIPs in six Virginia hospitals	FY26–FY27	\$5,000,000
Virginia Hospital Research and Education Foundation	Hospitals	Statewide	Expand support of HVIPs to three additional Virginia hospitals	FY26–FY27	\$3,550,675
<b>City Earmarks Round 1</b>					
City of Norfolk	Local government	Norfolk City	Purchase equipment for REAL TIME Crime Center	FY23	\$1,000,000
City of Portsmouth	Local government	Portsmouth City	Support hiring two violence interrupters and a program manager	FY23	\$500,000
<b>City Earmarks Round 2</b>					
City of Norfolk	Local government	Norfolk City	Purchase equipment for REAL TIME Crime Center (RTCC) and software training for officers who staff the RTCC, support community-based violence prevention and intervention activities	FY25	\$1,000,000
City of Portsmouth	Local government	Portsmouth City	Support community-based violence prevention and intervention activities	FY25	\$500,000

SOURCE: DCJS reports to the General Assembly and supplementary data provided by DCJS.

NOTE: <sup>a</sup> For nonprofit recipients, JLARC staff assigned locality based on the location or PO Box given on the organization’s webpage. In practice, funding could go to nonprofit activities in this locality and/or other localities in the region. For example, nonprofits in Hampton Roads and Central Virginia localities often have programs in several jurisdictions.

## Operation Ceasefire Grant Fund

The 2022 General Assembly established the Operation Ceasefire Grant Fund to replace and expand on prior funding initiatives, alongside the FVIP program. Operation Ceasefire funds are held in a non-reverting special fund and made available to qualifying applicants through recurring rounds of grant application calls. Operation Ceasefire grants are intended to support the implementation of violent crime reduction strategies, including training for law enforcement and prosecutors, technology and equipment for law enforcement agencies, or funding to hire additional prosecutors. Under the program, grant funds are available to (1) local law enforcement; (2) commonwealth's attorney offices; (3) CBOs or nonprofit organizations; and (4) state and local government agencies. Grant award decisions are made by the CJSB.

Since it was established, the General Assembly has appropriated \$40 million to this non-reverting fund. Operation Ceasefire has awarded five rounds of grants, with grant periods ranging from two to three years. Of the \$19.3 million in total funds awarded as of December 1, 2025, 43 percent has gone to local law enforcement agencies, 37 percent to local commonwealth's attorneys, 15 percent to state agencies (OAG and Virginia State Police), 2 percent to other local offices or departments, 2 percent to nonprofit CBOs, and 1 percent to local redevelopment and housing authorities. Commonwealth's attorneys primarily use the funds for staff, including attorneys, victim specialists, investigators, legal assistants, and forensic examiners. Law enforcement agencies have also used funds for staff—including detectives, public safety officers, and crime analysts—as well as equipment and technology such as real time crime centers, gunshot detection technology, body worn cameras, and tactical equipment.

OAG was awarded a \$2.6 million grant in the first round of Operation Ceasefire awards. However, under the 2024 General Assembly, funds were instead directly appropriated to the OAG in the amounts of \$1.3 million in FY25 and \$1.3 million in FY26. OAG operates its own gun violence reduction initiatives using these and other funds in its budget. It does not administer the larger Operation Ceasefire Grant Fund, which is administered by DCJS, but does have a representative on the CJSB that makes the grant decisions.

Operation Ceasefire appropriation amounts are presented in Table E-5. Funding recipients and amounts are presented in Table E-6. The most recent fifth round of grants was awarded on December 8, 2025, but those grants are not captured here because they were not available at the time of publication.

**Table E-5**  
**Operation Ceasefire Grant Fund appropriations**

Appropriation Act(s)	Funding Program	<u>Appropriation amounts</u>				Total
		FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26	
2022 Special Session I	Operation Ceasefire	\$2,500,000	<del>\$2,500,000</del>	-	-	\$20,000,000
2023 Special Session I			\$17,500,000			
2024 Special Session I	Operation Ceasefire	-	-	\$10,000,000	\$10,000,000	\$20,000,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$2,500,000</b>	<b>\$17,500,000</b>	<b>\$10,000,000</b>	<b>\$10,000,000</b>	<b>\$40,000,000</b>

SOURCE: JLARC staff review of appropriation acts.

**Table E-6**  
**Operation Ceasefire Grant Fund recipients**

Recipient	Recipient type	Recipient locality <sup>a</sup>	Purpose	Funding period	Funding amount
<b>Competitive Grants Round 1</b> (awarded Dec 2022)					
Office of the Attorney General	State agency	Statewide	Virginia Ceasefire program	CY23–24	\$2,600,000
Virginia State Police	State agency	Statewide	Law enforcement resources	CY23–24	\$256,044
The Buck Squad	Nonprofit	Charlottesville City	Group violence intervention	CY23–24	\$94,000
Chesapeake Commonwealth Attorney’s Office	Local government	Chesapeake City	Prosecutorial resources	CY23–24	\$100,905
Hampton City Commonwealth Attorney’s Office	Local government	Hampton City	Prosecutorial resources	CY23–24	\$230,460
Help Me Help You Foundation	Nonprofit	Richmond City	Intensive prevention	CY23–24	\$150,000
Lancaster County Commonwealth Attorney’s Office	Local government	Lancaster County	Prosecutorial resources	CY23–24	\$125,020
Lee County Commonwealth Attorney’s Office	Local government	Lee County	Prosecutorial resources	CY23–24	\$156,646
New Life Community Development Center	Nonprofit	Richmond City	Intensive prevention	CY23–24	\$30,000
Prince George Commonwealth Attorney’s Office	Local government	Prince George County	Prosecutorial resources	CY23–24	\$249,996
Prince William County	Local government	Prince William County	Violence interruption	CY23–24	\$353,974
Pulaski County Sheriff’s Office	Local government	Pulaski County	Law enforcement resources	CY23–24	\$57,200
REAL LIFE Program	Nonprofit	Richmond City	Violence interruption	CY23–24	\$145,600
Richmond Police Department	Local government	Richmond City	Law enforcement resources	CY23–24	\$50,000

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Recipient	Recipient type	Recipient locality <sup>a</sup>	Purpose	Funding period	Funding amount
Scott County Sheriff's Office	Local government	Scott County	Law enforcement resources	CY23–24	\$74,095
South Boston Police Department	Local government	South Boston Town	Law enforcement resources	CY23–24	\$34,517
Suffolk Commonwealth Attorney's Office	Local government	Suffolk City	Prosecutorial resources	CY23–24	\$326,500
<b>Competitive Grants Round 2</b> (awarded December 2023)					
Alexandria Commonwealth Attorney's Office	Local government	Alexandria City	Prosecutorial resources	CY24–26	\$497,282
Chesterfield Commonwealth Attorney's Office	Local government	Chesterfield County	Prosecutorial resources	CY24–26	\$496,986
Greenville Commonwealth Attorney's Office	Local government	Emporia/ Greenville	Prosecutorial resources	CY24–26	\$277,580
Hampton Commonwealth Attorney's Office	Local government	Hampton City	Prosecutorial resources	CY24–26	\$487,870
Newport News Commonwealth Attorney's Office	Local government	Newport News City	Prosecutorial resources	CY24–26	\$429,999
Nottoway Commonwealth Attorney's Office	Local government	Nottoway County	Prosecutorial resources	CY24–26	\$369,452
Patrick Commonwealth Attorney's Office	Local government	Patrick County	Prosecutorial resources	CY24–26	\$258,686
Petersburg Commonwealth Attorney's Office	Local government	Petersburg City	Prosecutorial resources	CY24–26	\$301,749
Portsmouth Commonwealth Attorney's Office	Local government	Portsmouth City	Prosecutorial resources	CY24–26	\$467,257
Prince George Commonwealth Attorney's Office	Local government	Prince George County	Prosecutorial resources	CY24–26	\$125,808
Prince William Commonwealth Attorney's Office	Local government	Prince William County	Prosecutorial resources	CY24–26	\$250,000
Richmond Commonwealth Attorney's Office	Local government	Richmond City	Prosecutorial resources	CY24–26	\$489,395
Spotsylvania Commonwealth Attorney's Office	Local government	Spotsylvania City	Prosecutorial resources	CY24–26	\$465,500
Virginia Beach Commonwealth Attorney's Office	Local government	Virginia Beach City	Prosecutorial resources	CY24–26	\$499,753
<b>Competitive Grants Round 3</b> (awarded June 2024)					
Chesterfield County Police Department	Local government	Chesterfield County	Law enforcement resources	FY25–26	\$154,190
Colonial Heights Police Department	Local government	Colonial Heights	Law enforcement resources	FY25–26	\$49,500
Dinwiddie County Sheriff's Office	Local government	Dinwiddie County	Law enforcement resources	FY25–26	\$206,274
Emporia Police Department	Local government	Emporia City	Law enforcement resources	FY25–26	\$120,000
Fairfax County Police Department	Local government	Fairfax County	Law enforcement resources	FY25–26	\$80,000
Franklin County Sheriff's Office	Local government	Franklin County	Law enforcement resources	FY25–26	\$65,900
Fredericksburg Police Department	Local government	Fredericksburg	Law enforcement resources	FY25–26	\$200,000
Greene Sheriff's Office	Local government	Greene County	Law enforcement resources	FY25–26	\$62,693
Greenville Sheriff's Office	Local government	Greenville County	Law enforcement resources	FY25–26	\$107,960
Haysi Police Department	Local government	Haysi Town	Law enforcement resources	FY25–26	\$16,407

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Recipient	Recipient type	Recipient locality <sup>a</sup>	Purpose	Funding period	Funding amount
Henrico Police Department	Local government	Henrico County	Law enforcement resources	FY25–26	\$200,000
Lexington Police Department	Local government	Lexington City	Law enforcement resources	FY25–26	\$200,000
Lunenburg Sheriff's Office	Local government	Lunenburg County	Law enforcement resources	FY25–26	\$130,035
Martinsville Police Department	Local government	Martinsville City	Law enforcement resources	FY25–26	\$80,000
Mathews Sheriff's Office	Local government	Mathews County	Law enforcement resources	FY25–26	\$167,667
Newport News Police Department	Local government	Newport News	Law enforcement resources	FY25–26	\$180,000
Norfolk City Police Department (NPD)	Local government	Norfolk City	Law enforcement resources	FY25–26	\$113,753
Patrick Commonwealth's Attorney	Local government	Patrick County	Law enforcement resources	FY25–26	\$9,000
Patrick Sheriff's Office	Local government	Patrick County	Law enforcement resources	FY25–26	\$65,000
Petersburg Police Department	Local government	Petersburg City	Law enforcement resources	FY25–26	\$158,595
Prince George Police Department	Local government	Prince George County	Law enforcement resources	FY25–26	\$186,380
Prince George Commonwealth's Attorney	Local government	Prince George County	Law enforcement resources	FY25–26	\$163,547
Pulaski Sheriff's Office	Local government	Pulaski County	Law enforcement resources	FY25–26	\$10,732
Pulaski Commonwealth's Attorney	Local government	Pulaski County	Law enforcement resources	FY25–26	\$130,000
Richmond Police Department	Local government	Richmond City	Law enforcement resources	FY25–26	\$100,000
Richmond Redevelopment & Housing Authority	Local RHA	Richmond City	Law enforcement resources	FY25–26	\$184,279
Roanoke Police Department	Local government	Roanoke City	Law enforcement resources	FY25–26	\$200,000
Strasburg Police Department	Local government	Strasburg Town	Law enforcement resources	FY25–26	\$40,626
Sussex Commonwealth's Attorney	Local government	Sussex County	Law enforcement resources	FY25–26	\$200,000
Tazewell Sheriff's Office	Local government	Tazewell County	Law enforcement resources	FY25–26	\$57,359
Virginia Beach Police Department	Local government	Virginia Beach City	Law enforcement resources	FY25–26	\$80,000
Warren Sheriff's Office	Local government	Warren County	Law enforcement resources	FY25–26	\$94,827
Wise Sheriff's Office	Local government	Wise County	Law enforcement resources	FY25–26	\$48,586
Wythe Sheriff's Office	Local government	Wythe County	Law enforcement resources	FY25–26	\$179,634
<b>Competitive Grants Round 4</b> (awarded March 2025)					
Abingdon Police Department	Local government	Abingdon Town	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$75,193
Albemarle County Police Department	Local government	Albemarle County	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$26,585
Alleghany County Police Department	Local government	Alleghany County	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$80,000
Amherst Police Department	Local government	Amherst Town	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$7,375

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Recipient	Recipient type	Recipient locality <sup>a</sup>	Purpose	Funding period	Funding amount
Bedford County Sheriff's Office	Local government	Bedford County	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$150,000
Big Stone Gap Police Department	Local government	Big Stone Gap Town	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$80,000
Brunswick County Sheriff's Office	Local government	Brunswick County	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$130,000
Buchanan County Sheriff's Office	Local government	Buchanan County	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$80,000
Charlottesville Police Department	Local government	Charlottesville City	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$150,000
Chesapeake Police Department	Local government	Chesapeake City	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$104,000
Chesterfield County Police Department	Local government	Chesterfield County	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$43,000
Colonial Heights Police Department	Local government	Colonial Heights City	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$150,000
Crewe Police Department	Local government	Crewe Town	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$87,725
Culpeper County Sheriff's Office	Local government	Culpeper County	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$120,000
Dickenson County Sheriff's Office	Local government	Dickenson County	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$150,000
Dinwiddie County Sheriff's Office	Local government	Dinwiddie County	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$7,000
Emporia Police Department	Local government	Emporia City	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$100,000
Farmville Police Department	Local government	Farmville Town	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$15,000
Franklin Police Department	Local government	Franklin City	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$120,000
Franklin County Sheriff's Office	Local government	Franklin County	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$63,395
Fredericksburg Police Department	Local government	Fredericksburg City	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$100,000
Greene County Sheriff's Office	Local government	Greene County	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$80,000
Greenville County Sheriff's Office	Local government	Greenville County	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$150,000
Hampton Police Department	Local government	Hampton City	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$100,000
Hanover County Sheriff's Office	Local government	Hanover County	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$82,919
Henrico County Police Division	Local government	Henrico County	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$100,200
Hurt Police Department	Local government	Hurt Town	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$7,682
Louisa County Sheriff's Office	Local government	Louisa County	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$100,000
Lynchburg Police Department	Local government	Lynchburg City	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$148,850
Martinsville Police Department	Local government	Martinsville City	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$107,000
Mathews County Sheriff's Office	Local government	Mathews County	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$100,662
Montgomery County Sheriff's Office	Local government	Montgomery County	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$100,000
Orange County Sheriff's Office	Local government	Orange County	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$85,140

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Recipient	Recipient type	Recipient locality <sup>a</sup>	Purpose	Funding period	Funding amount
Patrick County Sheriff's Office	Local government	Patrick County	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$150,211
Pennington Gap Police Department	Local government	Pennington Gap Town	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$15,950
Petersburg Police Department	Local government	Petersburg City	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$125,000
Powhatan Sheriff's Office	Local government	Powhatan County	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$64,190
Pulaski County Sheriff's Office	Local government	Pulaski County	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$80,000
Pulaski Police Department	Local government	Pulaski Town	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$83,108
Radford City Police Department	Local government	Radford City	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$130,855
Saint Paul Police Department	Local government	Saint Paul Town	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$29,138
Scott County Sheriff's Office	Local government	Scott County	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$57,195
Spotsylvania County Sheriff's Office	Local government	Spotsylvania County	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$58,733
Strasburg Police Department	Local government	Strasburg Town	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$81,630
Suffolk Police Department	Local government	Suffolk City	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$140,510
Tazewell County Sheriff's Office	Local government	Tazewell County	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$90,000
Virginia Beach Police Department	Local government	Virginia Beach City	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$120,000
Warren County Sheriff's Office	Local government	Warren County	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$100,000
Washington County Sheriff's Office	Local government	Washington County	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$79,772
Weber City Police Department	Local government	Weber City Town	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$100,000
Wise County Sheriff's Office	Local government	Wise County	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$100,000
Wythe County Sheriff's Office	Local government	Wythe County	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$95,000
York County Sheriff's Office	Local government	York County	Law enforcement resources	FY26–27	\$100,000

**Competitive Grants Round 5** (awarded December 2025)

Data not available as of publication

SOURCE: DCJS reports to the General Assembly and supplementary data provided by DCJS.

NOTE: <sup>a</sup> For nonprofit recipients, JLARC staff assigned locality based on the location or PO Box given on the organization's webpage. In practice, funding could go to nonprofit activities in this locality and/or other localities in the region. For example, nonprofits in Hampton Roads and Central Virginia localities often have programs in several jurisdictions.

## **Safer Communities Program**

The Safer Communities Program was established by the 2023 General Assembly as an additional funding source to address gun violence in three localities (Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Richmond). A fourth locality was added by the 2024 General Assembly (Roanoke City). Safer Communities funding is intended to support holistic, evidence-informed, and community-based strategies that address the root causes and conditions of community violence. Grants from this program may be used for (1) afterschool programs and mentorships; (2) connections to education and economic opportunity; (3) trauma-informed mental health care; (4) credible messengers and violence interrupters; and (5) strategies to build trust between law enforcement and community stakeholders.

Since it was established, the General Assembly has appropriated \$38 million for the designated Safer Communities localities. Localities draw down Safer Communities funding from DCJS as they can spend it, instead of the funding being appropriated to a non-reverting fund and awarded as a DCJS-administered grant. Of the appropriated amounts, \$35.6 million was made available to localities using the formula and allocations prescribed in the Appropriation Act, with the remainder of funds supporting DCJS administration of the program. Of the locally available funds, localities have spent \$12.4 million, not including amounts expected to be spent in FY26. Local governments have spent funds on a variety of local efforts through contracts with nonprofits and subgrants to nonprofit CBOs. Localities had difficulty spending the first year of Safer Communities funds (FY24) because localities had a short timeline to use them, had to establish new administrative functions to handle the funds, and were still in the process of developing programs and partnerships to effectively and responsibly use the funds. Consequently, localities spent almost none of the FY24 funds, and unspent funds reverted to the state general fund. However, localities spent almost all (95 percent) of the FY25 funds. Spending is likely to remain at this high level in FY26 now that all four Safer Communities localities have established lead offices, developed strategies, and identified key programs and partners to fund. DCJS indicated detailed data on exact local expenditures have not yet been centrally collected.

Localities can direct Safer Communities funds to local programs in three different ways. They can (1) allocate funding to city departments for specific purposes, such as city-managed intensive prevention programs or police community engagement efforts; (2) use funding to pay for contract services from a CBO, such as a violence interrupter program; and/or (3) provide grant funding to CBOs for other needed programs, such as stabilization, case management, or afterschool programs.

In addition to supporting local programs, Safer Communities localities must use grant funds to establish a full-time coordinator dedicated to planning, implementation, and coordination of community violence reduction strategies. In practice, this responsibility has gone to the lead local violence reduction office. Norfolk houses its violence reduction coordinator in the newly established Department of Military and Community Affairs; Portsmouth's coordinator is in its police department (Portsmouth United); Roanoke's coordinator is in the city manager's office (Firearm Violence Intervention and Prevention Coordinator); and Richmond's coordinator is within its newly established Office of Gun Violence Prevention in the mayor's office.

Safer Communities appropriation amounts are presented in Table E-7. Funding recipients and amounts are presented in Table E-8.

**Table E-7**  
**Safer Communities Program appropriations**

Appropriation Act(s)	Funding program	FY23	FY24	Appropriation amounts		Total
				FY25	FY26	
2022 Special Session I	Safer Communities	-	\$10,000,000	-	-	\$10,000,000
2023 Special Session I						
2024 Special Session I	Safer Communities	-	-	\$14,000,000 <sup>a</sup>	\$14,000,000 <sup>b</sup>	\$28,000,000
<b>Total</b>		-	<b>\$10,000,000</b>	<b>\$14,000,000</b>	<b>\$14,000,000</b>	<b>\$38,000,000</b>

SOURCE: JLARC staff review of appropriation acts.

NOTE: <sup>a</sup> The 2024 Special Session I Appropriation Act added Roanoke city as a Safer Communities recipient. The three original Safer Communities recipients were Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Richmond. <sup>b</sup> The General Assembly's 2025 Appropriation Act expanded Safer Communities funding to \$19 million in FY26, but this was vetoed by the governor. The funding would have expanded Safer Communities to include Hampton and Newport News.

**Table E-8  
Safer Communities Program recipients**

<b>Recipient</b>	<b>Reported uses (not intended as comprehensive)</b>	<b>FY24 <sup>a</sup></b>	<b>FY25</b>	<b>FY26</b>
City of Norfolk	Fund local lead office planning and coordination efforts. Expand pilot violence interrupter program under contract with CBO. Police department community engagement events. Police Athletic League Camps. Police citizen's academy sessions. Afterschool sports, field trips, and fitness programs. CBO community events.	\$3,334,000 available \$3,146 expended	\$3,605,462 available \$3,429,451 expended	\$3,595,000 available <i>In progress</i>
City of Portsmouth	Fund local lead office planning and coordination efforts. Police equipment and other police efforts. Violence interrupter program. Extensive sub-grants to CBOs (23 in last round) for multiple program types, including afterschool and summer prevention programs, intensive prevention programs, response/stabilization/case management programs, and support services like mental health and employment assistance.	\$2,846,000 available \$0 expended	\$2,946,182 available \$2,542,997 expended	\$2,923,000 available <i>In progress</i>
City of Richmond	Fund local lead office planning and coordination efforts. Police overtime and other police efforts. CBO center and services for victims of domestic abuse (YWCA). Parks & Recreation afterschool programs. Office of Community Wealth Building career readiness, summer employment, and youth academy programs.	\$3,320,000 available \$0 expended	\$3,563,335 available \$3,428,335 expended	\$3,538,000 available <i>In progress</i>
City of Roanoke	Fund local lead office planning and coordination efforts. Police efforts. City Youth and Gang Violence Prevention programs (variety of prevention programs). Public library afterschool and summer programs. RESET team. Housing.	\$0 available \$0 expended	\$2,960,021 available \$2,960,021 expended	\$2,944,000 available <i>In progress</i>

SOURCE: DCJS reports to the General Assembly and supplementary data provided by DCJS.

NOTE: <sup>a</sup> Because of the short timeframe from when Safer Communities funding was established to when FY24 funds had to be spent, localities were unable to spend most FY24 funds. Before localities could spend these funds, they needed to establish new administrative functions and develop programs and partnerships that can make effective and responsible use of the funds.





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