

# A GENERATIONAL GUN VIOLENCE REDUCTION PLAN

Mayor LaToya Cantrell  
City of New Orleans

MAYOR'S GUN VIOLENCE REDUCTION TASK FORCE

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August 2019

# Letter from Mayor Cantrell

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Fellow residents of the City of New Orleans,

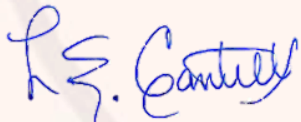
When I took office on May 7, 2018, I knew that we faced some tough challenges ahead, and that the only way we could meet them was if we went forward together. One of the most pressing challenges we face as a city is the high number of murders, which has topped 145 every year since 1972. With nearly 90 percent of murder victims being killed by firearms, our homicide problem is a gun violence problem.

To combat this issue, I commissioned the Gun Violence Reduction Task Force, composed of a broad range of community stakeholders, and charged them with developing a comprehensive set of recommendations for helping my administration deal with this epidemic in our city. I wanted a plan that would make a difference – not just in the short term with temporary successes, but one that would outlast my tenure, save lives for many years to come and lead to our city truly being safer.

It is important to remember that this plan is not a cure-all; gun violence in New Orleans will not be eradicated overnight. Determining exactly what works at scale will take years of iteration, trial and error, data analysis and community feedback. That being said, if we remain focused on making long-term, strategic investments in public health interventions that data shows are effective; if we improve our homicide clearance rate; and if we disrupt violence through intentional and sustained community engagement efforts, I know our city's next 50 years will involve far less gun violence than our last 50 years.

I would like to extend my sincerest thanks to the Task Force members who gave their energy, time, passion, and insight to the planning process. I also want to extend my gratitude to my staff, the consultants, community leaders, advocates, and local and national experts who played a role in devising this plan.

Yours for a safer New Orleans,



LaToya Cantrell  
Mayor of the City of New Orleans



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# Executive Summary

I envision a New Orleans where all residents are safe from gun violence and empowered to reach their full potential. There have been at least 145 murders in New Orleans every year for the last 50 years. Gun violence has ravaged our communities and families for generations, and we can no longer just respond to its aftermath; we must strategically work to prevent it. My administration's generational gun violence reduction strategy is grounded in a public health approach that relies on data and collaborative engagement across the public, nonprofit and academic sectors.

There are three core components of our approach:

1. **The Gun Violence Prevention Collective:** Specifically, we believe gun violence will decrease over time by creating an entity called the Gun Violence Prevention

critical role in removing dangerous individuals from our communities, deterring would-be shooters and increasing community trust in the criminal justice system.

3. **Community Engagement:** Cure Violence New Orleans (Cure Violence) is the local arm of an international violence intervention program based out of Chicago. The program aims to prevent shootings by identifying situations where the likelihood of violence is high and engaging to de-escalate the situations before violence occurs. The current program is rooted in Ceasefire New Orleans, with a similar usage of culturally competent messengers as violence interrupters and case workers who impact at-risk individuals in their neighborhoods and in hospital settings.

Sustainably reducing gun violence will be a long and hard road; the number of annual murders in New Orleans will not reverse overnight. Progress will require improving and investing in programs that data shows are working, sunseting those that are not, and designing and rigorously evaluating new interventions that have the potential to reduce gun violence. We believe this plan will

ensure that New Orleans is a city where all residents are safe from gun violence and empowered to reach their full potential.

“ I envision a New Orleans where all residents are safe from gun violence and empowered to reach their full potential. ”

Collective (GVPC). The GVPC will be tasked with funding and developing public health interventions, ensuring that programming is effectively delivered, and measuring the outcomes. Data-driven and informed by national best practices, the GVPC will offer individuals likely to be involved in gun violence comprehensive preventative services.

2. **Preventing Homicides by Solving Homicide Cases:** Through solving more homicide cases, law enforcement can play a

# Vision and Goals

## Vision

The Cantrell Administration envisions a New Orleans where all residents are safe from gun violence and empowered to reach their full potential.

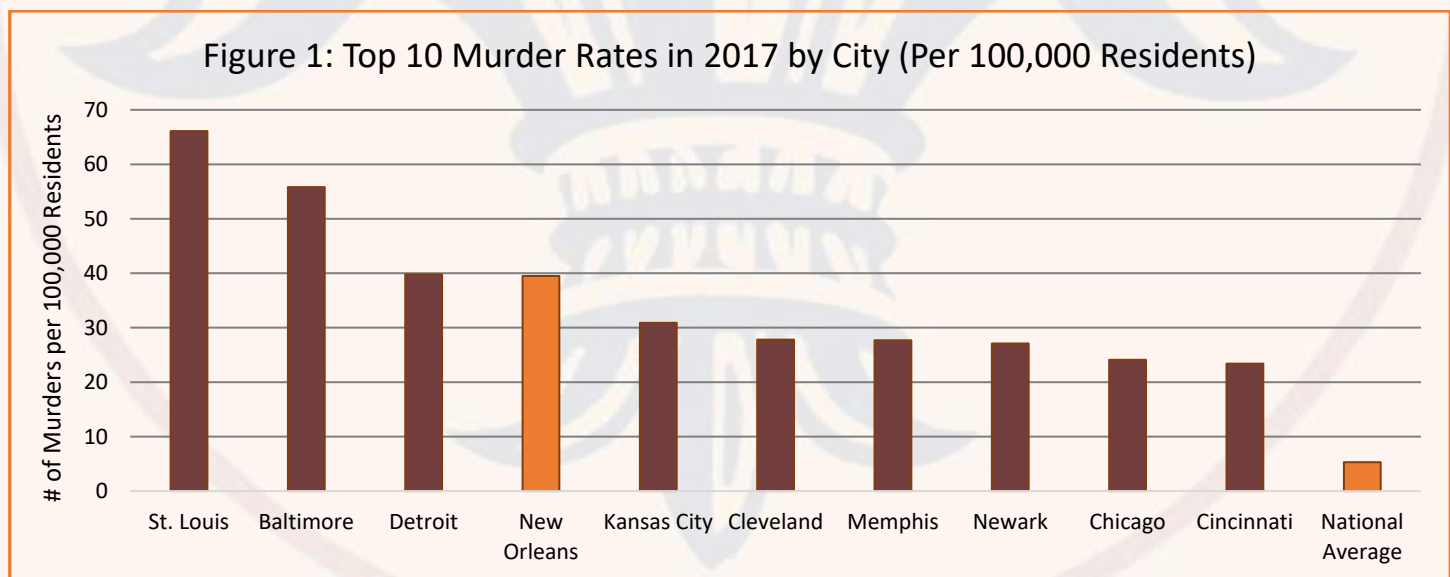
## Goals

This plan aims to meaningfully reduce the number of gun-related murders in the city over the next 50 years.

## Defining the Challenge: What Gun Violence Looks Like in New Orleans

In 2017, the most recent year for which national statistics are available, there were 157 murders in New Orleans (a rate of 39.5 per 100,000 residents), with 136 of them resulting from gun violence.<sup>1,2</sup> The national average rate for that same year was 5.3 per 100,000 residents, making New Orleans' rate

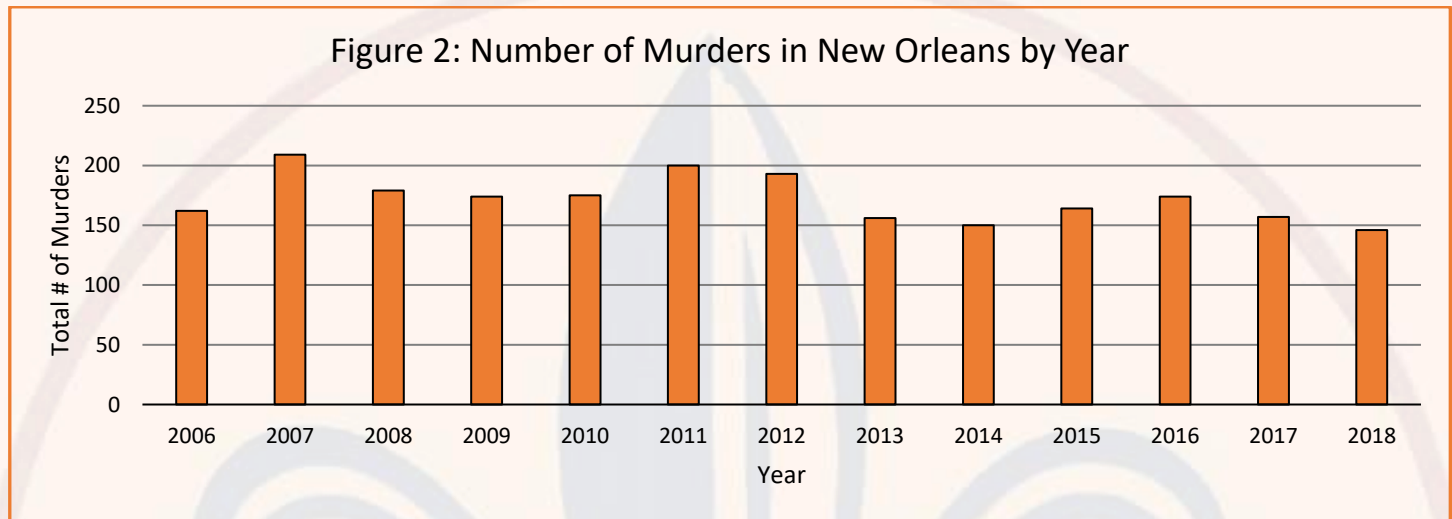
more than seven times the national average.<sup>3</sup> New Orleans has ranked in the top 5 nationally in murder rate every year since 1987, a streak that is largely driven by gun violence. Figure 1 below shows how New Orleans compares to other major cities in the U.S. when it comes to murders.



Source: FBI Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program

At 39.5 murders per 100,000 residents, New Orleans was fourth in the nation in 2017. While this represents an improvement over previous periods when New Orleans had the highest rate in the country, there still remains a lot to be done.

Figure 2 below shows the number of murders for the period from 2006 to 2018. The data shows that the total number ranges from 146 to 207 during this time. In order to reduce these numbers, a new approach is needed.



Source: FBI Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program

“ At 39.5 murders per 100,000 residents, New Orleans was fourth in the nation in 2017. While this represents an improvement over previous periods when New Orleans had the highest rate in the country, there still remains a lot to be done.”

# Why a Public Health Approach to Gun Violence Reduction?

Public health encompasses any threat to a person's life and wellbeing that can be prevented, contained or treated. For far too long, gun violence has been a leading cause of injury and death in our local community, but it can be prevented through focused interventions for individuals who need them most. This approach is not new; the U.S. successfully eradicated polio and dramatically decreased injury rates from car accidents through dedicated partnerships at every level of the community working towards a common goal.

Science tells us that gun violence concentrates in some communities or social networks.<sup>4</sup> This plan will interrupt the transmission of gun violence by focusing on:

- Upstream factors in a person's life that can be influenced to prevent their involvement in gun violence;
- Delivering appropriate interventions for a person's age and circumstances;
- Evaluating whether interventions are having the intended outcome; and
- Scaling successful prevention strategies.

This public health approach to gun violence reduction does not replace, nor is it at odds with law enforcement. Its focus is simply different: not deterrence, but prevention by addressing the root causes of gun violence. Communities around the country and world integrate public health into public policy challenges, and with respect to gun violence prevention, New Orleans will be no different.

However, my administration's approach will not be successful without community trust, engagement and transparency. As such, we are committing to the following:

1. Data collected pursuant to this plan will NOT be shared with the police and will NEVER be used for predictive policing.
2. The City will hold annual meetings in all five Council districts organized through the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Engagement to:
  - Educate the public about this plan and its specific elements;
  - Offer an avenue for meaningful community input;
  - Share progress reports on high-level successes/challenges related to the implementation of the plan; and
  - Provide an opportunity for individuals to voice their concerns regarding the plan
3. Annually, there will be a formal opportunity for community partners to have input on programming and interventions;
4. There will be an annual report produced for the public that will detail the GVPC's interventions and evaluate their effectiveness while also detailing the City's progress toward attaining the long-term vision laid out in the plan.

“ This public health approach to gun violence reduction does not replace, nor is it at odds with law enforcement. Its focus is simply different: not deterrence, but prevention by addressing the root causes of gun violence.”

# 1. Gun Violence Prevention Collective (GVPC)



Congressional funding for gun violence research stopped in 1996.<sup>5</sup> Since, there has been almost no research on the root causes of gun violence or interventions that prevent it.<sup>6</sup> City agencies, nonprofits and community organizations in New Orleans offer services that address some of the social determinants of health, but these efforts are not coordinated, systematically evaluated for their effectiveness, or based on long-term gun violence reduction research. Therefore, the causes of periodic reductions or increases in gun violence are difficult to understand and explain. To tackle this problem, my administration will create the Gun Violence Prevention Collective (GVPC) to coordinate, fund, and evaluate gun violence reduction interventions and their outcomes.

## How the GVPC Will Work

One of New Orleans' greatest strengths is its concentration of institutions of higher learning. The city's seven universities are an untapped resource that can position New Orleans as a premier research hub for measuring, studying, and combating gun-related violence. The GVPC will

function as a consortium of academics from New Orleans and other institutions across the country, and, in keeping with our public health approach, will be led by City Hall.

The GVPC will have three core functions:

“ . . . my administration will create the Gun Violence Prevention Collective (GVPC) to coordinate, fund, and evaluate gun violence reduction interventions and their outcomes.”

1. **Coordinate the Efforts of City Agencies and Nonprofit Service Providers:** City agencies and nonprofits provide services that, if better coordinated, could have an even greater positive impact in our communities. The GVPC will provide this coordination, reduce duplication of efforts and improve the overall effectiveness of programming by directing it to individuals who need it most.
2. **Fund Interventions and Partnerships:** Through various City agencies and funding streams, the City spends millions of dollars on programming and social services. The



GVPC will identify existing City funding sources and strategically align them with key stakeholders in order to ensure that resources are being allocated to provide interventions to our city's youth and adults who are most at risk of being involved in gun violence.

3. **Rigorously Evaluate the**

**Outcomes:** Beyond determining which individuals are most at-risk of being impacted by gun violence, the GVPC will coordinate local and national academics who will study whether specific interventions reduced gun violence and prevented other negative life outcomes. Further, a longer-term goal is to demonstrate that investing in specific,

community found that nearly 85% of all victims of fatal and non-fatal gunshot injuries could be located in a network comprised of 763 connected individuals.<sup>8</sup> Gun violence in New Orleans is no different, and the GVPC will focus on coordinating services so that resources are deployed to those who are most at risk.

- **Proof Before Scale:** Cities across the country have struggled to develop and deliver public health interventions that have been proven to sustainably reduce gun violence. Because municipalities are only recently starting to look at the viability of public health strategies to address gun violence, there is no playbook or set of clear strategies that are guaranteed to reduce gun violence over the long term. As my administration develops and delivers targeted interventions to individuals in New Orleans, we will start with small pilots before expanding to citywide implementation of strategies in order to ensure we are investing in proven interventions. This approach will not only allow for the pilot projects to be rigorously measured, but it will also allow for finite resources to be strategically and responsibly deployed. Investments made at a citywide level will only occur once we are satisfied that the interventions we are investing in will work.

“ Investments made at a citywide level will only occur once we are satisfied that the interventions we are investing in will work.”

proven interventions reduces the societal costs associated with gun violence (i.e. incarceration costs, court costs, medical costs, etc.).

### GVPC's Guiding Principals

- **Focus:** Research shows that gun violence is incredibly concentrated in American cities with only a small fraction of a city's population involved in the majority of violence.<sup>7</sup> For example, 70% of all victims of non-fatal gunshot injuries in Chicago could be located in a social network comprised of less than 5% of the city's population. Similarly, a study of a high-crime Boston

- **Making Better Use of Existing Resources:** A review of City programming reveals that the City of New Orleans has resources that can be strategically redeployed to offer services to individuals who are at heightened risk of being involved in gun violence. By reimagining how City resources are used and strategically investing them in expert, local nonprofits that can grow their impact with additional funding, we are confident that more effective programming



will reach individuals for whom it would do the most good.

- **Partnerships:** New Orleans is fortunate to have a robust nonprofit sector that plays a key role in providing critical social services to many of our community members. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, New Orleans has a wealth of academic experience, as the City has seven postsecondary institutions that can lend support to helping reduce gun violence in New Orleans once and for all. To be successful, partnerships between nonprofit

partners, postsecondary institutions and City agencies must be strong, collaborative and mutually beneficial; GVPC will coordinate these relationships.

- **Measuring, Adapting, and Improving:** The GVPC will rely on university and academic partners to measure the outcomes of interventions and determine their effectiveness based on rigorous data analysis. Insights gleaned from this analysis must be used to inform future interventions and programmatic investments.

## The GVPC - 2019 Summer Success Pilot

The Mayor's Summer Success Pilot is an example of the type of programming the GVPC will coordinate, fund and evaluate in the future. Research in other cities has shown that summer jobs programs that provide minimum wage summer jobs to at-risk youth reduced arrests for violent crimes, incarceration and premature deaths.<sup>9</sup> Through a partnership with the Office of Youth and Families and JOB1, the Gun Violence Reduction Task Force earmarked 100 summer jobs for youth ages 16-21 who had been arrested three or more times in the last eighteen months and as such were at greater risk of being the victims/perpetrators of gun violence.

Youth were referred to the program through a range of key stakeholders that included Orleans Parish Juvenile Court, Louisiana Center for Children's Rights (LCCR), Welcoming Project and Orleans Parish School Board's (OPSB) Office of Student Support & Attendance. Though senior officials from my administration are still evaluating the Summer Success pilot data, we do know that only 4% of the program's participants were rearrested during the summer. We will look forward to analyzing whether the program had additional positive impacts on participants.

## 2. Solving More Homicide Cases

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The U.S. Department of Justice notes, “The chance of being caught is a vastly more effective deterrent than even draconian punishment.”<sup>10</sup> Beyond deterrence, solving homicide cases quickly is also key to preventing future homicides. In 2017, the most recent year for which national figures on homicide clearance rates are available, the City of New Orleans’ homicide clearance rate was 50%, which was lower than the national average of 61.6%.<sup>11</sup> However, improvements in training, operations and collaborative case management can increase homicide clearance rates to 55% annually.

My administration will increase the New Orleans Police Department’s (NOPD) homicide clearance rate by using the following seven strategies:

### 1. Constructing the New Orleans Crime Lab

- While ballistics samples, drug identification confirmations and other scientific processes can currently be done in Orleans Parish, DNA processing is analyzed at the Louisiana State Police Crime Lab (LSPCL) in Baton Rouge and gun powder residue is analyzed in St. Tammany Parish. The construction of the new NOPD Crime Laboratory will centralize all of these key crime

analysis functions under one roof in our parish and streamline the forensic capabilities of the New Orleans Police Department.

**Timeline:** The Crime Lab should be completed by 2022.

### 2. Holistic Case Management

- NOPD will create a Homicide Investigation Process & Procedure Team (HIPP) for each murder case. This will ensure fully integrated communication between the officer who initially arrived on the murder scene and other officers and detectives who subsequently work on a specific case. This team-based approach will optimize information-sharing opportunities while consolidating the responsibility for solving homicide cases with a collaborative investigative body. For every homicide investigation, a HIPP team will consist of:

- Homicide Commander
- Homicide Sergeant(s)
- Homicide Detective(s)
- Street Gang Unit Member(s)
- Intelligence Unit Member(s)

- Major Case Narcotics
- Crime Lab Lieutenant
- Lieutenant(s) or Sergeant(s) from Districts 1-8 (as needed)
- Detectives from Districts 1-8 (as needed)
- Representative from the District Attorney's Office
- Tactical Intelligence Gathering and

3. Demonstrate transparency by working collectively
4. Give the community a way to engage in the process through the Community Liaison
5. Identify homicide trends, gaps and any deficiencies within the investigation process.

**Timeline:** HIPP teams will begin regularly meeting by January 2020.

“ An updated operations manual will enable a detective at any point in their career to immediately understand each and every step that should happen from the beginning to end of a homicide investigation.”

Enforcement Response (T.I.G.E.R.) team member (for shootings - as needed)

- Community Liaison
- Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) - Homicide Liaison
- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) Agent/Representative
- Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Agent/Representative

A HIPP team will meet weekly to ensure critical collaboration and information sharing among the aforementioned members of the homicide investigation process. Specifically, the HIPP team will meet to:

1. Share information on all active homicide cases and related non-fatal shootings;
2. Ensure that all possible avenues for identifying the responsible offender(s) are pursued;

### 3. Homicide Section

**Operations Manual** - NOPD will create a comprehensive Homicide Section Operations Manual that calls for goals that go beyond clearance rates and include specific best practice requirements for each homicide investigation. While a homicide section operations manual currently exists, it does not lay out in step-by-step detail how a homicide case should be

investigated.

An updated operations manual will enable a detective at any point in their career to immediately understand each and every step that should happen from the beginning to end of a homicide investigation. Adherence to the operations manual will be used to track key performance indicators and measure progress towards set department goals.

**Timeline:** The operations manual will be completed by July 2020

**4. Mentorship** - NOPD will create a structured mentorship program for all newly assigned homicide investigators. Currently, new homicide detectives follow a veteran detective for approximately two weeks before being assigned their own homicide cases to investigate. Starting immediately, all new homicide detectives will participate in a minimum of six weeks of homicide training, followed by weeks of shadowing a veteran detective. During the initial six-week training

period, each new detective will be given a case to investigate alongside a trained homicide detective, who can offer real-time guidance, support and feedback.

To prepare newer detectives for eventual promotion to the Homicide Section, a district detective from each of the eight police districts will investigate a minimum of one homicide per year alongside a senior homicide detective, as well as attend annual homicide trainings that are recommended by the Louisiana Peace Officers Standards and Training Council (POST).

**Timeline:** The NOPD's new homicide mentorship program began July 2019.

**5. Forensic Training** – NOPD will provide regular and mandatory forensic training to all homicide division and district detectives to ensure an understanding of the types of evidence that are subject to forensic analysis, the types of information that forensic analysis can provide, and best practices in the collection and preservation of forensic evidence. This training should allow for a more integrated work process among investigators, crime scene technicians and forensic scientists. At present, detectives are only given a short briefing on forensics during their week-long detective training. The department will standardize best practices while increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of getting all detectives up to speed.

“ Starting immediately, all new homicide detectives will participate in a minimum of six weeks of homicide training, followed by weeks of shadowing a veteran detective.”

**Timeline:** Forensic training for all homicide and district detectives will be established by January 2020.



## 6. Collaborative Review of Cases Cleared by Exception

– Homicide cases can be cleared either by warrant (a warrant is issued for a suspected perpetrator's arrest); by arrest (a suspected perpetrator is apprehended); or by exception (a homicide was deemed justified or the suspect died before charges were brought forward). Under my administration, before a case is deemed cleared by exception, it must go through a thorough review by the HIPP team and then be presented to the District Attorney for final review.

**Timeline:** New cleared by exception procedures will be established and implemented by January 2020.

## 7. Continue and Expand Chaplain Program

– NOPD employs trained chaplains who offer counseling to victims, families and community members on the scene of a violent crime or murder. Chaplains not only have the ability to comfort those in distress, their counsel could prevent retaliation or increase a community member’s willingness to cooperate with the investigation. Moving forward, my administration

will continue to support the work of chaplains who offer counseling on crime scenes, and we will look to expand the number of trained members of the faith-based community who can be a part of delivering that service in a volunteer capacity.

**Timeline:** The expansion of the volunteer part of the chaplain program will begin in January 2020.

“Chaplains not only have the ability to comfort those in distress, their counsel could prevent retaliation or increase a community member’s willingness to cooperate with the investigation.”

### 3. Cure Violence New Orleans

Cure Violence New Orleans (Cure Violence) is a community-based intervention that interrupts conflicts before they turn violent. Cure Violence



New Orleans is the local arm of an international violence intervention program based out of Chicago, IL, that reduces shootings by identifying situations where the likelihood of violence is high and engages high-risk individuals in order to de-

escalate situations before violence occurs. Building upon Ceasefire New Orleans, this intervention uses culturally competent messengers as violence interrupters and case workers who provide support and interventions to vulnerable individuals in their neighborhoods and in hospital settings.

The Cure Violence program under my administration will focus on:

- Connecting groups of individuals at high risk of gun violence to services and resources in order to assist them with making the decision to change their lives and communities. This approach relies heavily on interrupters (adults who previously participated in violent/criminal activities and are thus “credible messengers” on the street) and case managers;
- Mobilizing the larger community to present and reinforce social norms to resolve conflicts peacefully and thus reduce shootings and killings;
- Facilitating mediation sessions with young people and adults who were referred to Cure Violence by community members and partners in order to resolve disputes peacefully, before gun violence occurs; and

“*Cure Violence New Orleans ... reduces shootings by identifying situations where the likelihood of violence is high and engaging high risk individuals in order to de-escalate situations before violence occurs.*”

- Responding immediately to shootings of individuals 25 years old and younger at the hospital in order to diffuse tensions and prevent retaliation by friends and family members and to provide support and resources to victims when they have a great willingness to change their behaviors.

Cure Violence will also work with community partners to insert violence reduction programming into their existing curricula and trainings. Key community partners include the following:

- Schools: Cure Violence will work with schools throughout the City to identify opportunities for Cure Violence staff to discuss the impacts of gun violence, violence prevention and conflict resolution skills
- Healthcare providers: Cure Violence will collaborate with New Orleans Health Department programs, partner agencies, hospital emergency rooms and trauma units to provide support and resources for clients/patients identified as needing additional physical or mental health services

- Workforce training providers/businesses: Cure Violence will connect with workforce development partners and local businesses to provide career opportunities for participants
- Peer support groups: Cure Violence will facilitate peer support groups for participants to regularly discuss conflict resolution, life skills, peer mentoring, problem solving and long-term issues and concerns
- Service providers: Cure Violence will connect family members of those affected by violence (or its threat) to social, legal, faith-based, educational and health services
- Mentoring organizations: Cure Violence will work closely with partners who work with youth and adults engaged with the justice system to ensure there is a continuum of mentoring and supplemental supports provided to individuals who are at risk of ongoing exposure to violence

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*Cure Violence will also work with community partners to insert violence reduction programming into their existing curricula and trainings.”*



# Acknowledgements: The Gun Violence Reduction Task Force

The Public Safety Committee of Mayor Cantrell's Transition Team recommended that she establish the Mayor's Gun Violence Reduction Task Force (Task Force), which she did through executive order as one of her first acts as Mayor. The purpose of the Task Force was to present a data-backed plan to measurably and sustainably reduce gun violence in New Orleans over the next 50 years. Composed of experts in policy, service provision and community engagement, the Task Force focused on developing quantifiable strategies to address gun violence reduction in the City of New Orleans that included a wide array of perspectives, community voices and expertise. This report is the product of the recommendations of this group.

## Task Force Membership and Staff Support

The membership of the Task Force consisted of the following:

- Jeff Asher - Crime Data Analyst and Public Safety Consultant for New Orleans City Council
- Dr. Jennifer Avegno - Director of the City of New Orleans Health Department
- Joshua Cox - Director of Strategic Initiatives to Mayor LaToya Cantrell
- Flozell Daniels - Executive Director of Foundation for Louisiana
- Tamara Jackson - Executive Director of Silence is Violence
- Melissa Sawyer - Co-founder and Executive Director of Youth Empowerment Project (YEP)
- Nathalie Simon - Special Counsel to the CEO & President of Laitram, LLC
- Skipper Bond & Jordan Friedman - Bond Moroch

The Task Force received critical support from the following individuals:

- Dr. R. Erich Caulfield - Task Force Meeting Facilitator and Research Coordinator; Founder and President of The Caulfield Consulting Group
- Dr. Neil Kleiman - Public Administration Program, Tulane School of Professional Advancement
- Rayne Pestello - Special Assistant to Mayor LaToya Cantrell

These recommendations would not have been developed without the insight, advice, and dedication of the following groups and individuals:

## City and Other Government Agencies

- City of New Orleans Health Department (NOHD)
- City of New Orleans Police Department (NOPD)
- Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice Coordination (OCJC)

## Consultants, Service Providers and Other Subject Matter Experts

- Dr. Jonathan M.V. Davis
- Dr. Jennifer L. Doleac
- Dr. Sara Heller
- Dr. Judd B. Kessler
- Dr. Andrew V. Papachristos
- Charles West
- Young people engaged with Youth Empowerment Project (YEP)

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Some of the information contained in this report was taken in whole, or in part, quoted or summarized from the following sources:

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11. FBI Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program
12. Plan Design and Layout Credit: The graphic design and layout of this Plan was based upon prior work produced by Spears Group:  
<https://irp-cdn.multiscreensite.com/a41e72e5/files/uploaded/ForwardTogetherTransitionPlan.pdf>
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