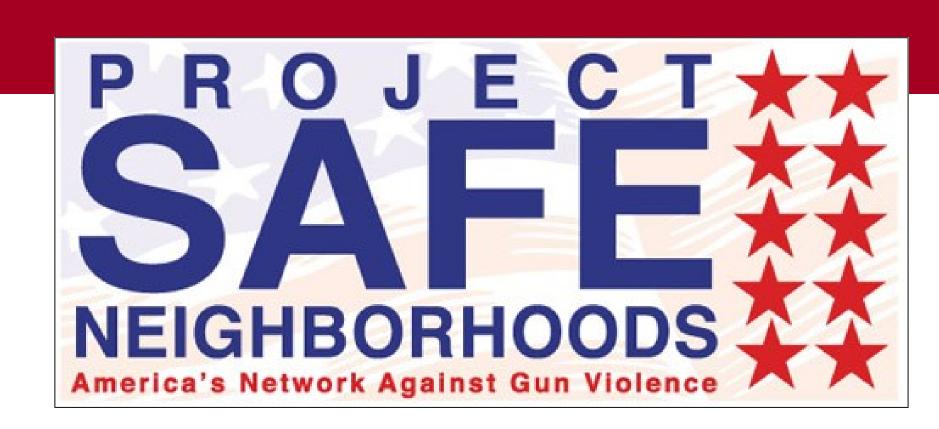


# Successful Partnerships: Project Safe Neighborhoods

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# Funding and Objectives

Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) joins federal, state, and local justice communities and their leaders in a wide-ranging, strategic approach to reducing gun crime violence in America. Under President George W. Bush's administration, the initiative was launched in May 2001 to build on effective programs for fighting crimes committed with guns. As a result of PSN sponsorship, there has been a considerable increase in the number of federal firearms prosecutions with offenders being sentenced to significant jail time.

Over \$1.5 billion has been committed to:

- Hiring new federal, state, and local prosecutors
- Providing training
- Hiring research and community outreach support
- Developing and promoting effective prevention and deterrence efforts

Each of the 94 federal judicial districts has designated a Project Safe Neighborhoods point of contact in the U.S. Attorney's Office to serve as the project coordinator. The coordinator is encouraged to create a special unit to target the most significant gun crime problems within the district. This directed effort is intended to maximize the impact of the PSN initiative and to help ensure the public safety.

Accordingly, local programs have been tailored to fit each district's unique problems and needs. The U. S. Attorney in each district works with local agencies and officials to formulate their PSN objectives. In accordance with these guidelines, federal, state, or local jurisdictions provide the most appropriate punishment. PSN funds are used to hire new federal, state, and local prosecutors; provide training; hire research and community outreach support; and develop and promote effective prevention and deterrence efforts.

# Strategies

Planning for Project Safe Neighborhoods does not require a uniform implementation approach; it is intended to supplement and enhance the districts' already effective strategies. Five essential elements have been identified to attain a forceful and successful gun crime reduction plan: partnerships, strategic planning, training, outreach, and accountability.

## **Partnerships**

Strong partnerships formed across all law enforcement agencies through the U.S. Attorney's Office ensure that a unified effort is made to reduce gun crime. These task force members, along with research, media and outreach specialists, and community leaders, bring a singleness of purpose across agency lines. Members promote the strategies of prevention, deterrence, and prosecution aimed at stopping criminal offenders and fostering community safety. Assisting the districts to implement these strategies, the Department of Justice (DOJ) created a Firearms Enforcement Assistance Team (FEAT). This national level team is comprised of agency personnel with expertise in the core elements of Project Safe Neighborhoods.

## Strategic Planning

The goal of each district plan is to reduce gun crimes; the individualized approach will vary based upon the particular problems facing each district. PSN asks that each U.S. Attorney develop a district strategy that is tailored to the specific causes of gun crime in the community and the availability of law enforcement resources, while reflecting three national priorities:

- Increased prosecution of violent organizations by aggressively using federal conspiracy, racketeering, narcotics, and all
  other available laws to attack and punish violent drug traffickers, violent street gangs, and violent robbery rings
- Heightened enforcement of all federal laws against illegal gun traffickers, and the corrupt federal firearms licensees that supply them, with an emphasis on those gun traffickers who supply illegal firearms to violent organizations and to juveniles
- Renewed aggressive enforcement of federal firearms laws against those persons prohibited from possessing firearms or who use firearms in furtherance of illegal activities, including those persons denied under the Brady Act

## Training

The DOJ and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) have joined with several national organizations and educational institutions to provide specialized regional training for prosecutors, agents, and officers involved in gun crime cases. This expansive network of training and technical assistance addresses such issues as firearms identification, safety, federal and state firearms statutes, federal and state search and seizure laws, crime scene and evidence management, firearms trafficking and tracing, and strategic planning.

Local level training efforts are also encouraged in each federal district through their U.S. Attorney's Office. The combination of participation in local and national training efforts can provide assurance that all key law enforcement personnel, both local and federal, will have the skills necessary to make PSN a success.

# Outreach

Community outreach activities and initiatives serve to shape the attitudes of law-abiding citizens as well as those who continue to violate the nation's gun laws. Communicating the PSN goals and results to the community through various outreach activities increases public awareness and supports the initiative's efforts in enforcement and prevention.

Effective outreach efforts include producing and distributing literature and mail campaigns, sponsoring local workshops, and producing public service announcements and news articles, among others. Each district selected an outreach partner to work with the local PSN task force to implement outreach plans by engaging members of the community in the PSN initiative.

# Accountability

To assess the effectiveness of the PSN program, it is critical to conduct a careful and consistent review of gun crime reduction efforts in each district. Reporting program activities provides the opportunity to assess the problems, solutions, and trends in each district. This review offers the ability to evaluate not only the program issues and methods, but also the efficacy of the national and local level response. Resources can be targeted accordingly.

The U.S. Attorneys are required to perform a review of their PSN strategy every six months, reporting the assessment outcomes to the Attorney General. The reports are reviewed by a team chaired by the Office of the Deputy Attorney General and comprised of individuals with expertise in each of the five PSN elements. Feedback from the team to the districts identifies model programs to share with other jurisdictions and provides assistance to districts encountering difficulties with implementation.

# Forensic Laboratory Division of the Allegheny County Medical Examiner's Office

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# Forming Partnerships

During the second year that Project Safe Neighborhoods was established through the U.S. Attorneys Office, the Medical Examiner's Forensic Laboratory was invited by the Pittsburgh Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) agent to become a member of the Gun Task Force in Western Pennsylvania. Committed to reducing gun violence by allocating resources to aggressively prosecute gun crimes and reduce gun violence, this task force was composed of Federal and Local Law Enforcement agencies. To accomplish these goals, it was recognized that the Firearms Section of the Medical Examiner's Forensic Laboratory would be needed to assist in analyzing firearms and fired components.

# Impacting the Laboratory

Over the course of three years of PSN Grant funding, the Forensic Lab Division received over \$543,000 for resources, which included funding for:

- Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS)
- Overtime funds for firearms analysis
- Two comparison microscopes
- Supplies
- Training and education
- Firearms technician (funded for two years)

The Allegheny County Medical Examiner's Forensic Laboratory is locally funded; participation in the PSN project resulted in gaining much needed resources that would otherwise not have been available.

Participation in the PSN project provided the opportunity to modernize the laboratory operation with a LIMS system and to improve the efficiency and productivity of the operation. On the downside, it contributed to an increase in firearm submission workloads.

# Impacting the Project Partnerships

Firearm analysis was expedited for the submitting agencies and federally adjudicated cases were prioritized. The laboratory also provided gun-related drug analysis (on a local basis) to federal and local agencies, which saved time compared with submitting drug cases to national federal laboratories for analysis. These actions resulted in increased federal prosecutions of gun crimes with mandatory prison sentences and enhanced the laboratory's ability to respond to local and federal requests for forensic testing.

# Using Project Resources in the Future

While grant funding for PSN projects has decreased, the Allegheny County Medical Examiner's Forensic Laboratory has recently submitted a grant proposal for consideration to fund \$80,000 in equipment under the 2006 Project Safe Neighborhoods Grant.



# Media Story: PSN Arrests Lead to Federal Indictments<sup>1</sup>

Two Pittsburgh Residents Face Federal Indictments – August 2006

"Two Pittsburgh area residents have been indicted by a federal grand jury for unrelated crimes. Charges include possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, and three counts bank fraud, punishable by up to 10 years in prison and/or a fine of \$250,000, and up to 90 years in prison and/or a fine of \$3 million, respectively."

Full story: http://www.gatewaynewspapers.com/woodlandprogress/64777/



' <u>www.psn.gov</u>

# PSN Training Partnerships<sup>1</sup>

PSN..."national training partners include the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), the National District Attorneys Association (NDAA), Michigan State University (MSU), American University, the Institute for Law and Justice (ILJ), the Academy for Educational Development (AED), the American Probation and Parole Association (APPA), the Community Policing Consortium, and the National Crime Prevention Council (NCPC)."

Visit the PSN website for an overview of PSN training programs and resources:

<a href="http://www.psn.gov/training/index.html">http://www.psn.gov/training/index.html</a>

# Columbus Police Crime Laboratory

# Forming Partnerships

The Columbus Division of Police established relationships with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives and the U.S. Attorney's Office to decrease gun violence and aggressively prosecute those who commit crimes with firearms in Columbus.

This was achieved by identifying and targeting violent offenders for investigation and federal prosecution for weapons violations based upon a numerical rating.

The rating was calculated using the following categories:

- Crime of Violence demonstrates continual involvement in crimes of violence. (7 point maximum)
- Felony Convictions emphasizes convictions for a crime of violence for those persons with multiple felony convictions. (5 point maximum)
- Drugs demonstrates involvement with illegal narcotics at any level. (2 point maximum)
- Street Gang demonstrates membership in a street gang. This is important when taking into consideration a street gang member's propensity to commit violent crime. (2 point maximum)
- Weapons Category demonstrates weapons charge not directly related to the element of a crime. This indicates that the involved person is likely to carry a gun. While this is insignificant absent other criminal activity, it becomes very significant when considered in connection with other rated areas. (2 point maximum)
- Felony in Past 30 Months demonstrates that criminal activity is recent. (1 point maximum)
- Three Types of Crimes demonstrates involvement in a number of different types of crime. (1 point maximum)

The Columbus Division of Police and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives identified felons arrested on weapons related charges that scored 14 or higher and those offenders with at least two convictions related to narcotics activity, firearms related offenses, or a felony crime of violence. These offenders were submitted to the United States Attorney for federal prosecution.

# Impacting the Laboratory

The crime laboratory received funding for overtime for firearms examiners (\$25,000) and for the purchase of a ballistic comparison microscope (\$60,000). This funding provided support for the additional demands placed on the laboratory due to the increased numbers of firearms submissions and requests for expedited service on these firearms.

There was an increase in requests for expedited service on the laboratory's firearms cases that were identified for federal prosecution. Generally, these were for operability; occasionally, the project required that comparison cases be expedited.

During the grant period, there was also an increase in the total number of firearms cases received. However, it is uncertain if the increase could be attributed to the PSN project or to a general increase in the number of firearms confiscated throughout the city of Columbus.

# Impacting the Project Partnerships

Through the use of overtime funds, the laboratory was able to expedite firearms cases as requested. It is uncertain how many firearms cases were expedited due to this project. However, per the closeout report of the original grant, "...in 2005, 782 arrests were made for firearms offenses and 105 were federally qualified."

Prior to the grant, the crime laboratory operated with one ballistic comparison microscope. Grant funding provided the laboratory with a second microscope, enabling two examiners to perform comparison examinations and National Integrated Ballistics Information Network (NIBIN) confirmations simultaneously.

# Using Project Resources in the Future

The original PSN Grant and one subsequent grant were written and administered by a Lieutenant in the Strategic Response Bureau of the Columbus Division of Police. After the original grant, the crime laboratory received funding for overtime, but no additional equipment funding.



# Excerpts from a Letter from President George W. Bush<sup>1</sup>

"Although progress has been made in fighting violent crime, America remains far too violent with a violent crime rate among the highest in the industrialized world....We need a focused national strategy to ensure that every community vigorously combats the problem of gun violence. Project Safe Neighborhoods is an integral part of that strategy. It will establish a network of law enforcement and community initiatives targeted at gun violence and will involve an unprecedented partnership among all levels of government. It will increase accountability within our system, and it will send a clear message to criminals — you will do hard time for gun crimes....those who commit crimes with guns will find a determined adversary in my Administration."

www.psn.gov

# Illinois State Police Division of Forensic Services Forensic Sciences Command



# Forming Partnerships

The Illinois State Police (ISP), Division of Forensic Services, Forensic Sciences Command laboratories involved in this project included the Metro-East Forensic Science Laboratory (MEFSL), located in Fairview Heights and the Southern Illinois Forensic Science Centre (SIFSC), located in Carbondale. The MEFSL and SIFSC have fostered and maintained long-standing partnerships with the U.S. Attorney's Office - Southern District of Illinois and local law enforcement agencies in their respective service areas. The involvement of the laboratories in this innovative program demonstrated their ongoing commitment to provide quality forensic services to the law enforcement agencies in the Southern District of Illinois

# Impacting the Laboratory

Participation in the Project Safe Neighborhoods initiative had a positive impact on the laboratories. The funding (\$40,000) allowed the laboratories to address the backlog of gun-related cases requiring examination by latent print and firearms examiners.

The grant funding was used to provide overtime compensation for latent print examiners, firearms examiners, and technicians to analyze gun-related cases and to upload data into the National Integrated Ballistic Identification Network (NIBIN) and the Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS).

Both laboratories developed mechanisms to track the status of gun-related cases associated with this funding and to determine the outcomes of any cases that were prosecuted. Additionally, the laboratories monitored case backlogs in the latent print and/or firearms sections during the program period covered by the grant funding. Overall, participation in the program resulted in a reduction of the number of gun-related cases that required analysis by the latent prints and firearms sections at both laboratories.

# Impacting the Project Partnerships

The latent prints and firearms sections at the MEFSL and SIFSC contributed quality forensic analysis and additional resources to ensure that the PSN initiative was successful. As a result of their contributions, partners were able to gain additional investigative information on gun-related cases and several gun-related cases were successfully prosecuted.

# Using Project Resources in the Future

with the U.S. Attorney's Office in the Southern District of Illinois in the Project Safe Neighborhoods programs and to establish PSN partnerships with the U.S. Attorney's Offices in the Northern and Central Districts of Illinois. The project resources obtained through future PSN partnerships have the potential to assist investigators and/or prosecutors in making connections to unsolved gun-related cases within the State of Illinois and possibly in other states.



# The Challenge<sup>1</sup>

"In 2003...nearly 10,000 of the nation's 14,400 murder victims died from gunshot wounds....Nearly half a million people are victims of firearm crime each year....Nearly a third of those murdered in 2003 were between the ages of 13 and 24, though this age group represents just 17 percent of the country's overall population. Young people also use guns to commit criminal acts. In 2003, about 30 percent of all murderers were between the ages of 13 and 24, and the vast majority of these criminals used firearms to kill their victim."

#### SAFE NEIGHBORHOOD America's Network Against Gun Viole

## Accomplishments Under PSN<sup>1</sup>

- Federal firearms prosecutions have increased 73 percent in the past 5 years
- In FY 2005, the Department prosecuted a record number of 13,062 defendants for violations of federal gun crimes, an increase of more than 62 percent from FY 2000 figures
- Defendants charged with federal firearms offenses are being sentenced to significant jail time. In FY 2005, over 93 percent of defendants charged with federal firearms offenses were sentenced to time in prison for convictions on firearms charges or other offenses
- The violent crime rate is at its lowest level since 1973, when the Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics started collecting criminal victimization data. The violent crime rate has steadily declined during the Bush Administration
- Non-fatal gun crimes are at their lowest level ever recorded and are down 42 percent since 2000. The per capita number of non-fatal violent crimes involving firearms has steadily decreased during the Bush Administration

<sup>1</sup> <u>www.psn.gov</u>

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