

ASSEMBLY, No. 4801

STATE OF NEW JERSEY 218th LEGISLATURE

INTRODUCED DECEMBER 10, 2018

Sponsored by:

Assemblyman LOUIS D. GREENWALD

District 6 (Burlington and Camden)

Assemblywoman ELIANA PINTOR MARIN

District 29 (Essex)

Assemblywoman VERLINA REYNOLDS-JACKSON

District 15 (Hunterdon and Mercer)

Co-Sponsored by:

**Assemblymen Johnson, Benson, Assemblywomen Timberlake, Jones,
Assemblyman Spearman, Assemblywomen Speight and Tucker**

SYNOPSIS

Establishes New Jersey Violence Intervention Program to fund violence reduction initiatives.

CURRENT VERSION OF TEXT

As introduced.



(Sponsorship Updated As Of: 3/8/2019)

1 AN ACT establishing a competitive grant program to fund violence
2 intervention strategies and supplementing Title 52 of the Revised
3 Statutes.

4
5 **BE IT ENACTED** *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State*
6 *of New Jersey:*

7
8 1. The Legislature finds and declares that:

9 a. In New Jersey, community violence is a public health crisis
10 that disproportionately impacts underserved communities of color
11 and firearm violence specifically is a major component of that
12 violence;

13 b. Each year, New Jersey suffers more than 1,000 interpersonal
14 shootings and, in 2016, African American and Latino men
15 constituted 90 percent of the total firearm homicide victims in the
16 State;

17 c. A few New Jersey cities suffer the vast majority of
18 homicides in this State, most of which are committed with a
19 firearm, and in 2015, more than half of the state's total homicides
20 occurred in the cities of Camden, Jersey City, Newark, Paterson,
21 and Trenton;

22 d. This violence results in enormous trauma, lifelong health
23 impairments, immeasurable human suffering, and significant
24 economic costs;

25 e. The direct costs of firearm violence in New Jersey are over
26 \$1.2 billion per year including healthcare expenses, law
27 enforcement and criminal justice expenses, costs to employers, and
28 lost income, and when reduced quality of life attributable to pain
29 and suffering is considered, the overall economic cost of firearm
30 violence is \$3.3 billion per year;

31 f. The vast majority of victims and perpetrators of violence are
32 young men of color who are at heightened risk for exposure to
33 violence because of a number of risk factors, including lack of
34 educational and economic opportunity, unaddressed mental health
35 needs, substance abuse issues, unstable housing situations, and
36 previous exposure to violence;

37 g. Research indicates that in most cities in the United States
38 less than a half percent of a given city's population is responsible
39 for the vast majority of violence and effectively intervening with
40 this high risk population is essential to addressing and preventing
41 interpersonal violence;

42 h. Historically, community-based violence intervention
43 strategies have demonstrated remarkable success at reducing
44 homicides and other incidents involving the use of firearms in
45 heavily impacted communities and when properly implemented and
46 consistently funded, these programs produce impressive life-saving
47 and cost-saving results in a short period of time;

1 i. Large reductions in violence have been seen in cities that
2 centrally coordinate multiple violence reduction strategies,
3 including New York City; and

4 j. Providing consistent funding and support to the evidence-
5 based violence reduction initiatives is an essential part of New
6 Jersey's comprehensive response to interpersonal firearm violence
7 and given the extremely high cost of firearm violence, public
8 investment in these solutions is very likely to generate significant
9 savings for New Jersey taxpayers.

10

11 2. The New Jersey Violence Intervention Program is
12 established in the Office of the Attorney General, in the Department
13 of Law and Public Safety. The purpose of the program is to invest
14 in effective, evidence-based violence reduction initiatives focused
15 on the highest-risk individuals in communities disproportionately
16 impacted by community violence, with a particular emphasis on
17 firearm violence.

18 Specifically, the Office of the Attorney General shall establish,
19 advertise, and administer grants through the New Jersey Violence
20 Intervention Program, conduct program evaluation to determine the
21 effectiveness of the violence intervention programs, submit and post
22 reports to provide transparency regarding the effectiveness of the
23 programs, and hold public forums to gather community input
24 regarding the programs.

25

26 3. a. The Office of the Attorney General shall award funds
27 from the New Jersey Violence Intervention Program on a
28 competitive basis to municipalities, health agencies, law
29 enforcement agencies, and non-profit organizations that serve
30 communities with disproportionately high rates of homicides and
31 other incidents involving the use of firearms, as determined by the
32 Office of the Attorney General.

33 The grants shall be used to:

34 (1) implement, expand, or enhance the coordination between
35 evidence-based violence reduction initiatives, such as hospital-
36 based violence intervention programs, street outreach programs, and
37 focused deterrence strategies, which have demonstrated
38 effectiveness at reducing rates of homicides and other incidents
39 involving the use of firearms;

40 (2) support the development and delivery of intervention-based
41 strategies by entities that engage directly with those individuals
42 identified as being in need of such services, to enable person
43 involved in or at risk of engaging in violent acts to avoid or
44 circumvent future acts of violence;

45 (3) support initiatives that primarily target a reduction of
46 violence and interrupt cycles of violence in the segment of the
47 population, identified through the collection and analysis of

1 objective data, having the highest risk of perpetrating or being
2 victimized by violence in the near future;

3 (4) ensure that a sufficient portion of the available grant funding
4 is provided to support programs directed at providing public
5 awareness, outreach, assistance or intervention services to victims
6 of firearm violence offered at community locations such as
7 hospitals where individuals may be encountered in the immediate
8 aftermath of a violent incident; and

9 (5) conduct annual assessments of the needs of communities
10 demonstrably affected by interpersonal violence to ensure program
11 funds are used effectively.

12 b. In awarding grants, the Office of the Attorney General shall
13 prioritize applicants operating in areas disproportionately affected
14 by serious violence, whose grant proposals demonstrate the greatest
15 likelihood of reducing the rate and number of homicides and other
16 incidents involving the use of firearms in the community served by
17 the applicant. The award applicants may apply either independently
18 or jointly.

19 The amount of funds awarded to an applicant shall not be limited
20 to a specific amount and shall be commensurate with:

21 (1) levels of firearm violence in the community served by the
22 applicant; and

23 (2) the applicant's demonstrated need for additional resources to
24 effectively reduce the rate and numbers of homicides and other
25 incidents involving the use of firearms in the community served by
26 the applicant.

27 c. A grantee may use the grant awarded to supplement, but not
28 replace, funding that would otherwise be made available to address
29 firearm, group, and community violence in the grantee's
30 community.

31

32 4. a. Application for a grant shall be made in a manner and
33 form as determined by the Office of the Attorney General. In
34 applying for the grant, the applicant shall provide:

35 (1) a description of how the applicant proposes to use the grant
36 funds to implement an evidence-based violence reduction initiative;

37 (2) a description of how the applicant proposes to use the grant
38 funds to promote or improve coordination among agencies,
39 organizations, and any already-existing violence reduction
40 strategies or programs, in order to minimize duplication of services
41 and achieve maximum impact;

42 (3) objective evidence indicating that the applicant's proposed
43 violence reduction initiative would likely reduce rates of homicides
44 and other incidents involving the use of firearms; and

45 (4) clearly defined, measurable objectives for the violence
46 reduction initiative.

47 b. Each applicant which is a county or municipality, including
48 a law enforcement agency, shall include in its grant application

1 plans to distribute at least 50 percent of the grant funds received to
2 either or both of the following:

- 3 (1) one or more non-profit, community-based organizations; and
4 (2) a public agency or entity that is not a law enforcement
5 agency but regards violence reduction as part of its mission. An
6 award made pursuant to this act may be used for the purpose of
7 creating or expanding the public agency or department.

8
9 5. The Office of the Attorney General may use up to five
10 percent of the funds appropriated or made available, or such
11 percentage as may be authorized under program guidelines for
12 funding made available to the New Jersey Violence Intervention
13 Program through federal funding sources, for the costs of
14 implementation and administration of the program, including but
15 not limited to employment of dedicated grants management and
16 programmatic personnel, and annual program evaluation and
17 analysis of the effectiveness of violence reduction initiatives.
18 These evaluations shall be made available to the public.

19
20 6. The Office of the Attorney General shall annually hold three
21 public hearings: one hearing in each of the northern, central, and
22 southern regions of the State. The public hearings shall provide a
23 forum to receive information on how the public funds are spent,
24 testimony from grant award recipients on the effectiveness of their
25 programs and best practices, and input from the public on whether
26 the initiatives and the grant funded programs are accomplishing
27 their respective missions. Public input shall be used to assess
28 whether the grant-making metrics and process for issuing grants
29 needs to be revised.

30
31 7. The Office of the Attorney General shall report annually to
32 the Governor and, pursuant to section 2 of P.L.1991, c.164
33 (C.52:14-19.1), to the Legislature, on the activities of the program.
34 The report shall include a listing of the grants awarded under the
35 program, descriptions of the initiatives and impact on the
36 communities served through the grants, and such other information
37 as the Attorney General deems appropriate.

38 The report shall include, but not be limited to:

- 39 (1) a list of all grant applicants and approved grant applicants;
40 (2) the amounts awarded to approved grant applicants;
41 (3) the amount of matching funds and types of in-kind
42 contributions provided by approved grant applicants; and
43 (4) a status report on the activities funded by an approved grant
44 applicant.

45
46 8. In addition to any moneys appropriated by the Legislature,
47 the Office of the Attorney General may seek money from the
48 federal government, including but not limited to Victims of Crime

1 Act grants, private foundations, and any other source to fund this
2 initiative.

3

4 9. The act shall take effect on the first day of the third month
5 following enactment.

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7

8

STATEMENT

9

10 This bill establishes the New Jersey Violence Intervention
11 Program (NJVIP) for the purpose of saving lives by investing in
12 effective, evidence-based violence reduction initiatives focused on
13 the highest-risk individuals in communities disproportionately
14 impacted by community violence, with a particular emphasis on
15 firearm violence.

16 Specifically, the bill requires the Office of the Attorney General
17 to establish, advertise, and administer grants through the NJVIP,
18 conduct program evaluation to determine the effectiveness of the
19 violence intervention programs, and provide written reports to
20 provide transparency regarding the effectiveness of the programs,
21 and hold public forums to gather community input regarding the
22 programs.

23 The bill requires the Office of the Attorney General to award
24 funds on a competitive basis to municipalities, health agencies, law
25 enforcement agencies, and non-profit organizations that serve
26 communities with disproportionately high rates of homicides and
27 other incidents involving the use of firearms. The bill provides that
28 the Office of the Attorney General is to prioritize applicants
29 operating in areas disproportionately affected by serious violence,
30 whose grant proposals demonstrate the greatest likelihood of
31 reducing the rate and number of homicides and other incidents
32 involving the use of firearms in the community served by the
33 applicant. The award applicants may apply either independently or
34 jointly. The bill requires that grants awarded cannot replace current
35 violence prevention funding being provided.

36 The bill requires applicants to provide certain information to
37 ensure measurable results when applying for the grant. In addition,
38 counties or municipalities, including law enforcement agencies,
39 applying for grants are required to provide plans in the grant
40 application to distribute at least 50 percent of the grant funds it
41 receives, pursuant to the application, to either or both of the
42 following: (1) one or more non-profit, community-based
43 organizations and (2) a public agency or entity that is not a law
44 enforcement agency, but which has violence reduction as part of its
45 mission.

46 The bill permits the Office of the Attorney General to use up to
47 five percent of the funds appropriated or made available, or such
48 percentage as authorized if through federal funding sources, for the

1 cost of implementation, administration, and evaluation of the
2 program. The evaluations conducted are to be made publicly
3 available.

4 The bill requires that the Office of the Attorney General annually
5 hold three public hearings: one hearing in each of the northern,
6 central, and southern regions of the State. The public input are to be
7 used to assess whether the grant-making metrics and process for
8 issuing grants needs to be revised.

9 The bill requires the Office of the Attorney General to provide a
10 report to the Legislature annually on the activities of the program,
11 descriptions of the initiatives and impact on communities served
12 through the grants, and any other information the Office of the
13 Attorney General deems to be appropriate.

14 It is the sponsor's intent that the bill would support community-
15 based violence reduction programs, such as Hospital-based
16 Violence Intervention Programs (HVIPs), Street Outreach Work
17 (SOW), Group Violence Intervention (GVI), and focused deterrence
18 strategies, which have demonstrated effectiveness at reducing rates
19 of homicides and other incidents involving the use of firearms.

20 The first example of these programs is HVIPs, which work to
21 break cycles of violence by providing intensive counseling, case
22 management, and social services to patients recovering from
23 firearm injuries, as research indicates that violently injured patients
24 are at extremely high risk of retaliating with violence or being re-
25 victimized in the near future. Evaluations of HVIP programs show
26 that patients who receive HVIP services are four times less likely to
27 be convicted of a violent crime and roughly four times less likely to
28 be violently reinjured than patients who do not receive services.

29 The next example is SOW, which is a public health-oriented
30 strategy that employs trained, culturally competent outreach
31 workers to detect and interrupt the emergence and transmission of
32 violence. Several evaluations have found this strategy to be
33 associated with significant reductions in firearm homicides and
34 assaults. In New York City, researchers found the Cure Violence
35 model of SOW to be associated with up to a 63 percent reduction in
36 shootings.

37 The final example is GVI, which is a strategy that coordinates
38 law enforcement, service providers, and the community to reduce
39 violence among a small, identifiable segment of the population that
40 is responsible for the vast majority of firearm violence in most
41 cities. Studies have found that GVI programs are associated with
42 homicide reductions of up to 60 percent.