

Services for Survivors of Violence and Violence Prevention Workgroup Recommendations

Exploring opportunities to improve services to survivors of violence both within and outside of APD. So few survivors report their abuse to law enforcement yet so much of the resources to mitigate violence are funneled through that department. We hope to explore ways that victims/survivors can access these resources.

Contact:

Amanda Lewis amichellewis@gmail.com

Work Group Members	1
Guiding Working Group Values	2
Recommendations	3
Community Based	3
Community-Rooted Safety Grant Program	4
Trauma Recovery Center (TRC) Model	7
Sex Worker Outreach Services	7
Community-Based Economic Services	7
Community-Based Prevention	11
Education and Engagement of Non-Police Crisis and Healing Options	12
Internal City of Austin	12
Mental Health Referral Fund	12
Safety for sex workers	13
Independent Office of Police Oversight	13
Mandated Reporting	14
Office of Violence Prevention (OVP)	14
Victim Services	15

Work Group Members

Aja Gair - SAFE

Kachina Clark - APD Victim Services

Tricia Forbes - Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice

Courtney Santana - Survive2Thrive

Jenny Black - SANE nurse

Farah Muscadin - Director of OPO

Neva Fernandez - Victim Services Manager DA's office
Jen Margulies - Undoing White Supremacy Austin
Shelli Egger - Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid, Gun Violence Task Force and Family Violence Task Force
Eloise Sepeda - Mission Capital, Formerly Refugee Services of Texas
Emily LeBlanc - CASA of Travis County
Julie Sweeney - County Attorney's Office, DVHRT
Noor ZK - Sex Worker Outreach Project of Austin
Connie Geerhart - APD Victim Services
Amanda Michelle Lewis - Survivor Justice Project
Deepika Modali - Asian Family Support Services of Austin
Angel Carroll - MEASURE
Maggy McGiffert - UTMB Center for Violence Prevention

Presenting Members (List of members that would plan to be a part of presenting the work group's final recommendations at Council Work Session on April 20th, 2021)

Amanda Lewis amichellewis@gmail.com
Noor ZK contactswopatx@gmail.com
Jennifer Margulies jennifer.margulies@gmail.com
Kachina Clark Kachina.Clark@austintexas.gov
Connie Geerhart connie.geerhart@austintexas.gov
Emily LeBlanc eleblanc@casatravis.org
Farah Muscadin Farah.Muscadin@austintexas.gov
Aja Gair agair@safeaustin.org
Eloise Sepeda eloisesepeda@gmail.com

Guiding Working Group Values

- **Victims/Survivor** - We define survivors of violence as communities, families, and individuals who have been impacted by violence, including those accused of harm.
- **Healing Justice** - We believe that all survivors of violence and their families should have the opportunity to heal in any way that feels right for them. According to Cara Page, healing Justice is a framework that identifies how we can holistically respond to and intervene on generational trauma and violence and to bring collective practices that can impact and transform the consequences of oppression on our bodies, hearts and minds. Healing resources must be

decentralized and increased to meet the diverse needs in Austin. Right now, many people who experience harm have very few options that don't require police reports. Austin should consider creating a collective care/ healing justice strategy with the support of national TA providers.

- **Non-profit and systems accountability outside of the Criminal Legal System** - We know that white supremacy impacts service delivery; organizations that receive city funds, especially through the reimagining process, should undergo an equity assessment process along with continuous equity analysis. Only programs by and for specific communities should be funded to do community-specific work.
- **Universal Precautions for Trauma** - We understand that trauma and harm are widespread; we should act in ways that recognize that anyone we engage with can potentially be victims/survivors of harm.
- **Anti-racism work is anti-violence work** - Culturally-affirming programs and organizations are not only vital for healing but are essential for the prevention of harm and violence. Different forms of oppression are at the root of violence; we cannot end violence without ending oppression.

Recommendations

Note: The recommendations that follow are initial recommendations. The SSVVP Workgroup acknowledges that fully reimagining how our city creates safety for survivors of violence and prevents future violence requires more than a matter of months. This is especially true when taking seriously the charge to work in concert with full input from community members. We recommend that additional time and funding be dedicated to the process of more fully developing and planning implementation of these initial recommendations.

Community Based

Note: The SSVVP Workgroup is aware that much of the public conversation about Reimagining Public Safety and victims of violence has centered on the possibility of decoupling Victim Services and APD. The Workgroup's recommendations on that matter may be found in the Internal City of Austin section of this document. However, the Workgroup strongly recommends that the City think more broadly about services to victims and survivors in Austin, and understand that Victim Services as currently configured is only one piece of a larger pie. Rather than trying to divide up that one slice even further among resources within and outside of the criminal legal system, the City should expand the entire pool of funding available for survivor healing, and for the restoration and repair of harm. Our recommendations include significant amounts of

funding being dedicated to resources outside of the criminal legal system without any reduction of funding to existing Victim Services.

The SSVVP Workgroup acknowledges that the generational violence and community harm caused by our current system of policing means that there are vast numbers of people in Austin who cannot and will not access the criminal legal system for remedies. Accordingly, the SSVVP Workgroup recommends that the City fund a proliferation of community based services that give people who are not going to access the criminal legal system supportive places to turn. We recommend that these funds be drawn from the harmful systems of policing identified for divestment by the Patrol and Surveillance workgroup. These community based services should be fully funded and resourced, culturally responsive, located throughout the city, and have full language and ability accessibility and staff who are paid livable wages with benefits.

The SSVVP Workgroup envisions this proliferation of community options as a way for survivors who are not interfacing with the criminal system to access the kinds of medical, financial, and care resources and services available through resources such as the Crime Victims Compensation Fund and other survivor services that currently require survivor coordination with the criminal legal system. Accordingly, access to all of the community based options recommended here should *never* require coordination with the criminal legal system. Furthermore, all funded initiatives should ensure that mandatory reporting policies and practices are equitable and do not over-reach beyond State of Texas requirements. All community based options funded by the City should follow the process recommended by the "Uprooting Punitive and Harmful Culture in Intersecting Systems" Working Group. The following community-based recommendations address initiatives that will begin to create an environment in Austin in which all survivors of violence have access to care and material support.

Community-Rooted Safety Grant Program

In alignment with the Reimagining Public Safety Task Force values of committing to liberation and freedom, holistic community safety, accessibility, and divesting from systems that cause harm, the he SSVVP Workgroup recommends that the City of Austin **establish a permanent Community-Rooted Safety Grant program to fund culturally responsive, community-rooted initiatives to address violence and create safer futures.** The Community-Rooted Safety Grant Program will invest in community-led prevention and intervention efforts that build community safety. It will elevate and support existing grassroots community-based strategies for creating safety, healing harm, and preventing violence. It will also support community members in

developing their practices and building capacity for deepening community safety strategies.

Specifically, we recommend that the City establish a permanent Community-Rooted Safety Grant Program of at least \$350,000 per year that will fund community groups to lead promising initiatives in at least one of three areas:

- Safety and Immediate Well-being
- Healing and Repair from Harm
- Prevention - Planting Seeds for Violence-Free Futures

Awards

Grant awards will be for a minimum of two years and a maximum of four years. Organizations may reapply.

Administration

The SSVVP Workgroup recommends that this grant fund be administered through the Austin Public Health Department (APH). We recommend that APH follow the Equity Office's mini-grant protocol to keep funding accessible to initiatives led by and for people most impacted by violence and by violent systems of policing.

Eligible Organizations

Eligible organizations and groups are those whose primary purpose is to work in culturally-rooted ways with individuals and communities most impacted by racism, poverty, and the violence and surveillance of the traditional policing system. Applicants do not need to be 501c(3) organizations; we recommend that APH follow the Equity Office's mini-grant protocol to keep funding accessible to initiatives led by and for most communities most impacted by violence and by violent systems of policing.

Applicants must center those communities most directly impacted by the prison industrial complex; specifically Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American, LGBTQIA+, Immigrants, Youth, People with Disabilities, and cash poor populations. Applicants will be asked to demonstrate how their proposed effort and their organization itself both reflect this focus.

Eligible Activities

Eligible activities under each subject area include, *but are not limited to:*

Safety and Immediate Well-being

Example areas of activity may include, for example:

- Crisis Intervention
- Victim/Survivor Emergency Funds

Healing and Repair from Harm

Example areas of activity may include, for example:

- Transformative Justice Circles
- Healing Circles
- Pod-mapping

Prevention - Planting Seeds for Violence-Free Futures

Example areas of activity may include, for example:

- Economic Empowerment
- Culturally Rooted Parent/Family Support
- Community Defense Zones

In addition, community-directed training or networking in service to the project should be an allowable expense, so that grassroots groups can build their capacity in ways they define as necessary and useful.

Community Accountability

The SSVVP Workgroup recommends that grant award decisions be made by a community review panel made up of APH staff members, Equity Office staff members, and community members. Budget allocations to the Equity Office (and any other participating City entity) should be increased to support the increased workload of participating in the review process. Community members on the review panel would be funded for their participation and should include representatives from organizations led by and for people most impacted. In future years, grant recipients not eligible for the current cycle of funding could also serve on the review panel, with additional compensation provided.

The application process should be as low-barrier as possible. Grant reviewers should all be trained to assess applications based on the project's potential impact or outcomes, not on how well-polished the application may be. Not having a professional grant-writer should not be a barrier to applicants.

The Community-Rooted Safety Grant program should be subject to a periodic outside evaluation process that incorporates substantive meaningful participation from community members most affected by violence.

Trauma Recovery Center (TRC) Model

The SSVVP work group recommends that the city, through the Office of Violence Prevention, provide **\$1 million** in funding for the creation of a Trauma Recovery Center (TRC). TRCs provide free, culturally responsive trauma informed therapy and case management for survivors of all violent crime, regardless of any involvement with the criminal legal system or immigration status. TRCs are located in high-crime areas to serve victims that often do not access other services, and they address the needs of survivors who are traditionally underserved, such as people experiencing street violence, gun violence, people who are homeless, LGBTQ+ victims, and communities of color. TRC's are also uniquely situated to serve victims and families impacted by multiple crimes who have complex trauma and require comprehensive services.

Please see the Alliance for Safety and Justice report: [Trauma Recovery Centers: Addressing the Needs of Underserved Crime Survivors in Texas](#). Also see op-ed in the Austin American Statesman from a Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice member in Austin, [Opinion: Our city must do more to break the cycle of violence](#). Also see report on [The Trauma Recovery Center Model](#). The SSVVP recommends that the formation of Austin TRC be led by people from the communities most impacted by crime and violence and organizations led by and serving those populations.

Sex Worker Outreach Services

Recommendation: \$460,000 first year, then \$260k annually to fund sex worker outreach services by and for sex workers. Including but not limited to:

- a. Survey about violence within the community to strengthen the data available - \$200k
- b. Peer support programming (bad date list, paid peer mentorship) and mutual aid - \$75k
- c. Street outreach and harm reduction - \$80k
- d. Public health campaign against stigma for sex working, unhoused, and drug using populations - \$30k
- e. Cultural competency trainings for legal / medical /social service providers in Austin - \$75k

Community-Based Economic Services

Recommendation: Expand a larger amount of funding to emergency financial assistance projects. Immediate cash assistance is a primary need identified by survivors of violence when trying to get safe and heal. Providing multiple avenues for

survivors to access low barriers, flexible, emergency financial assistance is very important in order to reach those most vulnerable and most marginalized. Many agencies and community partners could use funds of this nature to quickly support individuals and families, promoting self-determination in the aftermath of violence, and reducing the need for initial or ongoing systems involvement for those who do not want it. A current example of a financial assistance program is the "[Bridge to Safety](#)," a program of The SAFE Alliance, which is currently funded by the City of Austin.

1. Increase the number of community partners who can distribute city-funded brief financial assistance to at least 5 additional sites in the next fiscal year.

- a. Provide centralized distribution as an option for additional funded partners to ease administrative burdens and to ensure that most funds go directly to those seeking financial assistance.
- b. Do NOT require police reports or criminal legal system involvement to access funds.

Funding Recommendation::

- \$75,000 p/year, p/site, for direct financial assistance x 6 (1 current, 5 additional) agencies = **\$450,000**
- Allot additional funds for coordination and administrative components of centralized distribution support, and/or for FTE/PTEs if agencies staff distribution themselves x 6 (1 current FTE, 2 additional) = **\$225,000**

2. Broaden eligibility for brief financial assistance funds to all victims/survivors of violence, allowing a greater number of individuals and families to utilize these monies in order to access safety and healing resources.

3. Provide easier access to city-affiliated transportation, including free and deeply reduced CapMetro passes, to projects/individuals/agencies who are distributing brief financial assistance funds.

- 100-150 passes p/year, p/site

It is recommended that the city incorporate some of the recommendations outlined in FreeFrom's [Trust Survivors: Building an Effective and Inclusive Cash Assistance Program](#) report when creating these resources. Funding should:

- Give survivors of all types of violence multiple places to access these funds through culturally rooted community organizations and partners that are readily accessible throughout the city
- Involve multiple options of how cash assistance can be distributed to individuals (for example, cash, venmo, not requiring bank accounts),
- Reserve a certain amount of funds for those most marginalized (people who identify as LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC),
- Not require "proof of" or eligibility requirements for receiving funds,

- Be flexible with no strings attached,
- Be available for victims/survivors to access healing resources with these funds, not just immediate safety resources,
- Not require individuals to “become clients” of an organization or have continued involvement with the distribution site.
- Be able to be distributed quickly, within hours the same day if necessary

Currently, Bridge to Safety (BTS) is a city-sponsored project, administered at The SAFE Alliance, that allows for one-time funding to individuals who have experienced Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, and/or Human Trafficking in last six months. BTS funds can be used for things like housing application fees, one-time rent or deposits, hotel stays, transportation to any shelter in the US where person wants to relocate (in coordination with that shelter), security, cell phone, gas cards, bus tickets, ID, childcare, education, employment assistance, translation, legal assistance, medical and dental care, or plane fare. Bridge to Safety is meant to be fast -- funds are distributed within hours or the same day.

Viewing SAFE’s Bridge to Safety as a pilot, the SSVVP Workgroup envisions that the city would fund more, similar sites, who would be able to distribute these types of funds. Additional distribution sites may benefit from centralized coordination so that each site does not have to fund FT staff, and more money can flow directly to those who need it.

Community-Based Housing Recommendation:

1. Create a subsidy program to **incentivize landlords to rent at reduced and stabilized rates to low income trans people of color**, as identified through sex worker outreach and harm reduction programs. Since part of project connect's equity development plan includes potentially buying land to prevent gentrification, this is something that would help make sure these underserved populations of violence survivors are not left out of the picture.
 - a. example: St. James Infirmary and Larkin Street youth Services partnership with the City of San Francisco: “Addressing the homeless issue, which disproportionately affects trans people, has been a priority for Mayor London Breed, who last year announced that St. James Infirmary and Larkin Street Youth Services were awarded two-year contracts for the subsidy program. St. James will receive \$490,000 annually while Larkin Street will receive \$660,000. The total budget request of \$2 million also includes \$300,000 for trans housing stability case management for two years.” <https://www.ebar.com/news/news//287122>

Funding Recommendation: **\$500,000 p/year**

2. **Fund black trans led initiatives around the city, including a community housing trust for housing units that would serve traditionally underserved populations of black trans individuals who are survivors of state and interpersonal violence.**

- a. example: [Black Trans Leadership of Austin](#): \$500k for home cost, \$40k for 2 house manager part time salaries, \$40k for admin salary, \$10k legal support, \$5k team development trainings, \$5k supplies

Funding Recommendation: **\$600,000 p/year**

3. In addition to, and recognizing the potential intersections with, Community Housing-Based Recommendations 1 & 2, the city must: **Increase and diversify funding for housing support, including subsidies, a housing trust, crisis/emergency housing providing Hotel Safety Net stays, food vouchers, and creation of a permanent fund to address the COA housing crisis. Specific attention and resources must be earmarked for victims/survivors who are also experiencing housing insecurity and/or homelessness, and displaced victims/survivors of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, and Human Trafficking. Availability of the funds cannot require law enforcement reporting and/or cooperation.** Some diversified options, including Hotel Safety Net programs, an example of which is [Survive 2 Thrive](#), already exist in our community, are currently funded by the City of Austin and are in need of additional funding. This need certainly extends to individuals who have experienced many types of violence, including victims/survivors living in homeless camps who may wish to access long term resources, including transitional or supportive housing. Many victims/survivors are in danger but cannot access shelter quickly and must spend time on shelter waitlists, and in the interim need a safe place to go. The Survive2Thrive Foundation (S2T) provides temporary housing to individuals who have experienced Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault who face displacement and homelessness when shelter is unavailable through a five county wide safety net of hotels in Austin and the surrounding counties. These individuals are placed in available hotel suites with kitchenettes and laundry facilities for up to 45 days and given food and necessary resources like case management and telecounseling. The one-time funding also goes to provide transportation stipends, housing deposits/application fees, travel funds, and expenses associated with stabilizing them into semi-permanent/permanent housing. These programs provide victims seeking assistance an immediate option when fleeing violence.

We expect that this recommendation will be taken up by many RPSF

Workgroups and requires urgent, specific, and ongoing attention and investment made in line with TF values and SSVVP's overarching recommendations.

Funding Recommendation: **\$15,000,000 p/year**

4. **Offer funding for implementation of SSVVP Economic Recommendations (see above) at any city-funded housing support sites** (brief financial assistance & increased access to city-affiliated transportation).

Community-Based Prevention

Recommendation:

1. In the next two fiscal years, **fund at least 3 programs or projects that expand or uplift existing school-based and place-based, extracurricular, parenting support, and/or additional community-driven prevention efforts; expand the number of programs funded and/or funding amount in later fiscal years.**

Funding Recommendation: **\$500,000 p/year**

- \$75,000 p/FTE
- \$25,000 minimum for program supplies and direct support to participants
- \$20,000 p/location, for expanding site-based and/or extracurricular programs

The SSVVP Workgroup recommends that COA diversify prevention money, particularly via funding that does not flow through the criminal legal system and instead invests in place-based (schools, apartment complexes, neighborhoods, etc.) extracurricular, and non-systems-based community violence prevention programs that uphold RPSF values. Prevention is an effective and financially efficient way to move efforts to reduce violence “upstream,” investing in and serving individuals and families in nurturing and healthy ways that are not crisis driven. Here in Austin, many of these types of primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention activities are already occurring in the community and at non-profit organizations; however more funding, especially for culturally affirming engagement opportunities, and to reach a greater number of youth and men, are needed.

Arts, athletic, and culturally affirming programs, with local examples such as [Youth Rise Texas](#), [Creative Action](#) and [OutYouth](#), include primary prevention strategies that have the potential to build community and promote healthy and engaging activities for youth. These types of programs are often the first to experience funding cuts during periods of financial hardship in the community, and need to be uplifted as our city transitions out of the COVID pandemic and post-storm crises. Grassroots organizations, including [Man in](#)

[Me](#), which works to, “educate, strengthen and support men towards responsible manhood and fatherhood,” are doing meaningful prevention work and reaching parents where they are in communities with everything from meals in local parks to parenting groups. Programs should be place-based and specifically include parts of the city that have been historically impacted by overcriminalization; ensuring funds toward these efforts have, at minimum, parity with what was previously spent to police these areas of the city is critical. These kinds of programs are effective, financially efficient, and could be readily implemented widely throughout the city; they, and community-driven services and resources that are yet to be imagined, will enrich neighborhoods and other areas with resources that can prevent violence and are deserving of the city’s investment.

2. The SSVVP Workgroup also expresses support for the recommendations of the [Community Equity Reinvestment](#) workgroup. Cash funds for basic needs and community-directed funding within neighborhood hubs are promising “upstream” approaches to preventing violence.

Education and Engagement of Non-Police Crisis and Healing Options

The city must dedicate funding and resources to help victims/survivors understand their healing and accountability options outside of the criminal legal system. Opportunities to raise awareness include:

- Creating a page on the city’s website detailing options for healing and accountability
- Training 311 operators on how to assist people in crisis find culturally responsive resources
- Partnering with community-based organizations to engage with individuals about what to do in crisis and how to meet long term healing needs.

Internal City of Austin

Mental Health Referral Fund

1. **\$360K annually to expand the EMDR training program**, currently housed with Victim Services, to also provide free access to other healing modalities, some of which may be more culturally resonant.
 - a. Currently the EMDR program costs 50k annually to train community based therapists in exchange for free therapeutic services to victims/survivors regardless of reporting status

- b. Several community-based organizations can access the therapy referral list; we recommend opening this list of referring organizations to any groups that serve survivors/victims of harm.
- c. This fund would directly pay for healing services instead of requiring victims/survivors to submit for reimbursement
- d. Includes \$60k for ½ FTE to coordinate fund

Safety for sex workers

The SSVVP working group recommends that city release individuals arrested, and stop arresting individuals for prostitution and solicitation. The city should advocate for the county to dismiss charges and for the expungement of records for those who have been previously convicted.

The city should also advocate to end Phoenix Court and instead, refer individuals to local community outreach programs that are relevant to their needs, like sex worker outreach programs and harm reduction programs. If the appropriate programs don't exist or are not robust enough to serve the need, invest in paying people who are already doing the work in-community to continue and build capacity.

Full decriminalization of sex work is the ultimate goal, resisting partial decriminalization such as the “Nordic model” of partial decrim which protects sex workers but criminalizes their clients, thereby increasing incidents of violence and lack of safety and screening ability for sex workers.

In Baltimore many minor offenses will no longer be prosecuted, including prostitution, drug possession, trespassing, open container, public urination, paraphernalia possession, attempted distribution of drugs, and minor traffic offenses. These are all charges that are used to criminalize street economy based people as well as unhoused people. While homicides increased 30% in 2020 across the country, in Baltimore, violent crime dropped 20% with this approach. Given the significant overlap between people dependent on the sex trade, people who use drugs, and people who are unhoused, following Baltimore's lead in stopping the prosecution of all minor level offenses on this list - while also intentionally including solicitation, so as to not create a partial decrim model that creates further harm - would be directly in service of creating a safer environment for the most marginalized members of Austin's communities.

Independent Office of Police Oversight

The SSVVP workgroup recognizes that there is specific violence in our city that is perpetrated by the police, and that the degree and type of power and privilege

experienced by officers who cause harm requires an equally specific type investigation and accountability process. Reporting this violence to the very department that has caused it is unrealistic and untenable for many victims, and the OPO can be one viable option; many of the solutions outlined by this group aim to provide alternative resources for survivors to turn to, but we find that those will not be fully realized without a safe and independent accountability body to address police harm so long as APD exists. The workgroup recommends that the OPO is relocated from the City Manager's Office, to a position comparable to the City Auditor, with authority and access to fully engage with city and department administration in responding to the experiences of victims of police violence.

Mandated Reporting

The SSVVP recognizes that overly broad mandated reporting practices harm survivors, discourage seeking help during and/or in the aftermath of interpersonal violence, and promote deeply harmful and institutionally violent racial inequities. As such, we recommend that APD review and revise their policies regarding mandated reporting, with meaningful engagement from Victims Services; specifically, reevaluate and revise current practice of reporting to The Department of Family & Protective Services in all instances of responding to survivors who have kids. Address the reality that current practices disproportionately and negatively impact survivors of domestic violence and their families and communities.

Office of Violence Prevention (OVP)

The Office of Violence Prevention - Austin's first *ever* civilian office dedicated to community safety and violence prevention - will be uniquely positioned to support the work of the RPSTF going forward. We recommend that the City create a permanent Violence Prevention Coalition anchored by the RPSTF with the addition of survivors, youth, and individuals with lived experience from the most impacted neighborhoods to guide OVP program development and budget priorities by leveraging power with - not over - community.

Recommendation - \$500,000 to facilitate a community-led strategic planning process rooted in the principles of racial justice, inclusivity, transparency, self-determination, and participatory decision-making. During this process, it is imperative to integrate opportunities for healing from collective trauma. For example, Equity-Centered Community Design, created by [Creative Reaction Lab](#), is a unique creative problem solving process based on equity, humility-building, integrating history and healing practices, addressing power dynamics, and co-creating with the community to dismantle systemic oppression. Another model developed by Dr. Lesley-Ann Noel, Associate Director for Design Thinking for Social Impact and Professor of Practice at Tulane

University, utilizes a modified approach to design thinking, starting with reflection on one's own identity and the identities of others and how these show up in both the design process and the proposed solutions. This approach helps people notice diversity, and to see it as a strength in the design process, while co-creating solutions that are relevant to diverse users. Using this approach she has collaborated with the Crescent City Corps to co-create possible solutions to improving relations between the New Orleans Police Department and residents of New Orleans.

Recommendation - \$500K to build local capacity to assess, monitor, and utilize violence-related data from a variety of sources. This should include the creation of a Homicide Review Team which is an evidence based program that attempts to reduce homicides and nonfatal shootings through a multilevel, multidisciplinary, and multi agency case review process intended to identify system gaps and opportunities. See, *Milwaukee Homicide Review*.

Recommendation - \$2 million in immediate funds to implement, monitor, and evaluate pilot strategies to interrupt the cycle of community violence in the neighborhoods most impacted by police violence. There are several models from around the country that have shown both immediate and long-term reductions in gun violence. These proven strategies have similar principles and common best practices, including:

- Identifying and focusing on individuals, groups, and neighborhoods at the highest risk of being involved in gun violence;
- Engaging those individuals in a trusting relationship with trained, culturally-appropriate outreach workers with relevant life experience who connect participants to wrap-around services, supports, and opportunities that provide alternatives to violence; and
- Building trust with key people in the community to learn about ongoing disputes, recent arrests, recent prison releases, and other disputes, then using mediation techniques to resolve them peacefully.

In the future, the pilot model could be scaled up by embedding trained violence interrupters within the community-led neighborhood “hubs” proposed by the Community Equity Reinvestment Working Group.

Victim Services

Victim Services serves a critical role within APD and the safety and wellbeing of survivors and victims would be harmed by physically decoupling from APD before transformational change is seen within the department.

1. Administratively decoupling Victim Services (VS) from APD requires the following:
 - a. Full access to offense reports, police radio, CAD, Versadex (all Criminal Justice Information System Reports)
 - b. Access to victims at the first police interaction (when patrol officers are dispatched)
 - c. Physical co-location of VS staff, within their assigned sworn units
 - i. Increases capacity to advocate for victims/survivors when VS advocates can read, enter supplements, and liaise
 - ii. Ensures VS Counselors are available at all times when a victim comes in for a statement
 - iii. Maintains checks and balances-VS are likely to see issues before the public become aware of it
 - iv. Fosters relationship building so that advocates can elevate survivor voices
 - d. Victim Services should be the last unit physically decoupled and decoupling should be driven and informed by the communities most harmed, community-based survivor advocates and by Victim Services leadership.
2. **Recommendation-** The VS Manager should report to the Assistant City Manager over public safety or the APD Police Chief.
 - a. VS Manager to be included in executive and command staff meetings, and have regular access to the APD Chief for communication and collaboration.
 - b. This will serve to educate those in power of the services that VS provides, including direct services to clients, community and law enforcement training, and other programming.
 - c. This will ensure that VS has a voice at the decision making tables.
3. **Recommendation-** The APD budget should reflect the value the department attributes to victims' voices. As such, victim service salaries should be competitive and not depreciated by cutting benefits or replacing needed positions with temporary positions. Victim service counselors should be paid a salary comparable to experienced counselors within our community and comparable to victim service professionals in communities of comparable size.
4. **Recommendation** - Dedicate 30 hours of training time (currently 16 hours) for cadets and 2 hours yearly training for patrol officers, and inclusion in Field Training Officer training and recertification. VS will coordinate with outside

service agencies to provide training regarding VS role, trauma-informed response to survivors, case studies, role plays, and victim rights, with emphasis on interacting affirmatively with survivors representative of Austin's diverse communities. While there are other components of the Reimagining Task Force that are focused on police training related to history of policing, equity, and cultural humility, the piece that VS would be responsible for coordinating would center on victims, witnesses, and survivors of crime, trauma, and violence.

5. **Recommendation** - Move to a model where each Sexual Assault survivor has the option to speak to a patrol officer, a VS counselor, or both, with the counselor being the first point of contact (either by phone or taking the lead on the scene), so that the survivor will know what the counselor can offer and their options regarding reporting.
 - a. Counselors have more experience and expertise; counselors respond to Sex Crimes calls weekly and sometimes daily. Officers respond to Sex Crimes call much less frequently (some as few as every couple of months).
 - b. Easier to train 40+ counselors in trauma-informed interviewing for the purpose of taking a report than to train hundreds of officers.
 - c. Important to still have law enforcement involved if the survivor is calling 911 to initiate a report.
 - i. This is to fulfill the caller's expectation (they may prefer to speak with a police officer as opposed to anyone else).
 - ii. Unless it is known that the scene is safe (e.g., offender is not on site, survivor is stable enough to identify a non-law enforcement person as being there to help, etc) then it is important to have law enforcement there.

6. **Recommendation** - Victim services collaborate with the Equity Office and community stakeholders to implement opportunities put forth by the Community + APD Equity Assessment Series: Austin Police Department, Victims Services Division Report.
 - a. Development of concrete equity standards and assessment processes
 - b. Development and implementation of training modules on critical race issues as part of recruiting, training, orientation and onboarding processes
 - c. Collaboration with Equity Office and community to develop and implement specific accountability metrics for ensuring equitable practices

Total: 22,445,000