

COMMON COMPONENTS OF SUCCESSFUL PSN STRATEGIES

Over PSN's lifespan, several best practices for firearms and antiviolenace strategies have emerged. These practices, which do not require additional grant or programming money, are components a United States Attorney's Office (USAO) should consider implementing when devising a comprehensive PSN strategy. Many USAOs already include these components in their district strategies.

Keep in mind that these are general guidelines; USAOs are in the best position to determine the strategy best suited to its local violent-crime problems. For example, a strategy focused on eradicating gang activity may not be suited to a rural district where removing domestic-violence offenders is the district's priority. At any rate, including the following components in a strategy can ensure a comprehensive, methodical, strategic approach to reducing violence that ensures the districts' vital partners are working together.

Convene a Forum for Intelligence Sharing, Threat Assessment, and Priority Enforcement

United States Attorneys are well-suited to serve as their districts' "quarterbacks" for convening the partners needed to develop and implement a comprehensive PSN strategy. USAOs should consider establishing a regular meeting of supervisory-level representatives from the district's necessary partners (*e.g.*, ATF, FBI, United States Marshals Service, state and local police departments, local prosecutor's office, probation and parole offices). These supervisory representatives should be able to share intelligence about your district's geographic hot spots and the high-impact offenders responsible for driving significant violence there, and to deploy their offices' resources to address the hot spots and priority offenders. USAOs have often found it prudent to focus PSN efforts on a discrete geographic area, such as a particularly violence-plagued police precinct or neighborhood, with the expectation that driving down gun or violent crime in that area can reduce the larger district's violent-crime rate. These areas of intense focus are often called "PSN sites."

Establish a Regular Gun-Case-Review Process with the Local Prosecutor's Office

Enhanced partnerships with local law-enforcement partners has always been one of PSN's objectives. A USAO's coordination with its PSN site's local prosecutor's office (or multiple offices if there are multiple PSN sites) is critical for ensuring that gun offenders are systematically prosecuted in the proper venue and face the most appropriate punishment. Multiple districts have processes in place so that representatives from the USAO and the local prosecutor's office meet regularly, either in person or by phone, to decide whether each gun arrest in the jurisdiction should be prosecuted locally or federally. Factors to consider in this determination include:

- Whether a gun offender is a priority target (such as a gang leader or an individual with multiple prior convictions for domestic offenses) or has ties to a violent criminal organization;
- Whether local law provides more significant punishment for a possessory offense (such as a local recidivist law that subjects a non-ACCA-eligible defendant to a mandatory-minimum sentence);

- Whether a weak local bond or parole statute makes it likely a dangerous defendant will be released pretrial or before serving a full sentence;
- Whether federal imprisonment would effectively isolate a defendant from his local criminal associates; and
- The prosecution resources of the respective offices.

When Federal Prosecution is Appropriate, Consider all the Statutory Tools to Remove Violent Threats from the Community

The Attorney General has directed federal prosecutors to use the substantial tools at their disposal to hold violent offenders accountable and ensure an appropriate punishment. These tools naturally include: possessory gun offenses under 18 U.S.C. §§ 922 and 924(c); Hobbs Act robbery, 18 U.S.C. §1951; carjacking, 18 U.S.C. § 2119; violent crimes in aid of racketeering, 18 U.S.C. 1959; racketeering offenses under 18 U.S.C. §§ 1961-68; and violations of the National Firearms Act, 26 U.S.C. § 5861. Prosecutors should also consider targeting other criminal acts that may be equally or more effective in removing violent threats, such drug-trafficking and immigration-related offenses. In addition, prosecutors may also consider whether a swift, sure prosecution under a statute that provides a suitable sanction is a better alternative to a longer-term racketeering investigation and prosecution, or to commonly prosecuted violent offenses.

Identify the Appropriate Data Sources to Inform the Strategy, and Reassess Whether the Strategy is Working

The USAO and its partners should consider the multiple sources of data within a district that can inform an antiviolence strategy. Often, a local police department's intelligence unit will have much of the pertinent data needed to assess a PSN site's violent-crime problems (*e.g.*, calls for service, violent-incident reports, gun-confiscation data). Other agencies, such as the local prosecutor's office and local probation and parole agencies, may also house useful data to review. Once all the data sources are identified and the data are collected, districts should periodically review the data to determine whether the PSN strategy is impacting the violent-crime rate and whether it should be refined. A comprehensive list of data sources and the kinds of data that may be helpful are located on the PSN Toolkit; see the Research and Data page.

Promote Outreach, Prevention, and Reentry Efforts

Outreach, prevention, and reentry efforts have long been part of PSN, and USAOs should incorporate prevention efforts as part of their comprehensive PSN strategy. USAOs should assign a contact(s) for these efforts, and may consider partnering with an effective outreach and prevention provider, such as a community organization or consortium of community groups. In addition, USAOs may wish to consider establishing or participating in a regular, non-law-enforcement-sensitive forum for community stakeholders (*e.g.*, local police; local government and public-school representatives; community organizations and service providers; faith-based groups; probation, parole, and corrections agencies) to share information and address community concerns about violent crime, public safety, and opportunities for former offenders. A list of resources to consider when fashioning a prevention plan is located on the PSN Toolkit website; see the Prevention/Outreach/Reentry page.

Other Resources

A plethora of other resources and best practices for developing a PSN strategy are also available on the PSN Toolkit; see the Violence Reduction Strategies page.