



Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV): 2008-2011 Home Visits Report*

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Prepared by:

Samuel Peterson, M.S.

Amy Deger, B.A.

Jeffrey E. Clutter, M.S.

Robin S. Engel, Ph.D.

University of Cincinnati Institute of Crime Science

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Introduction

CIRV Overview

In response to escalating levels of violence, particularly homicide, the City of Cincinnati implemented the Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV) in 2007. Recognizing that violence impacts a variety of groups within the city, CIRV used an assortment of stakeholders that included political leadership, law enforcement, academics, medical professionals, street advocates, social services providers, and community and business leaders to develop and implement a comprehensive strategy to reduce violence in the city. Through multi-agency collaboration, CIRV uses a focused deterrence approach similar to that of the Boston Gun Project's Operation Ceasefire (Braga, Kennedy, Waring, & Piehl, 2001). This approach recognizes that a relatively small proportion of individuals often account the bulk of the crime in a city. In Cincinnati, 0.3% of the population was identified by police as a member of a violent group or gang. These gang members have lengthy prior records (averaging 35 charges per person), and were responsible for 75% of the city's homicides in one year (Engel et al., 2009). CIRV targets these individuals and the gangs they represent by promising swift and certain law enforcement and prosecutorial action against gangs who continue to commit violent acts, while also offering social services to those offenders seeking to transition out of a criminal lifestyle.

The CIRV message is aimed at disrupting group dynamics that promote violence as a means of dealing with conflict and gaining respect. The primary method of message delivery is through "call-in" sessions (Chermak & McGarrell, 2006; Papachristos, Mears, & Fagan, 2007). Individuals who are currently on parole or probation and were previously identified as members of violent gangs are required to attend these sessions as conditions of supervision and are expected to relay the CIRV message to other gang members. Call-ins follow a formalized

process whereby CIRV partners present the message from three different fronts. Law enforcement officials pledge to increase pressure on gangs associated with violence, social service providers provide information about programs to help them transition from a criminal lifestyle, and community members and homicide victims' families illustrate the damage caused by violence—demanding that it end (Kennedy, 1997; 1998). These notification sessions are repeated as necessary to demonstrate the delivery on promises and reiterate the message of nonviolence to the target population. As of 2010, 568 (32.5%) identified gang/group members representing 41 (89.1%) violent gangs attended at least one notification meeting (Engel, Tillyer, & Corsaro, in press).

Several evaluations of focused deterrence approaches in other cities have shown substantial reductions in violence (Braga et al., 2001; Braga & Weisburd, in press; Chermak & McGarrell, 2004). Likewise, a recent evaluation of CIRV found a statistically significant 42% reduction in gang member involved homicides (Engel et al., in press). A critical aspect of the continued evaluation and ultimate success of CIRV is continued monitoring of CIRV processes. This ensures fidelity to the CIRV model and allows program personnel to make data-driven decisions regarding potential changes in CIRV strategy. Accordingly, the positive effects of focused deterrence approaches in other cities have not persisted over time (Kennedy, 2007). With this in mind, CIRV uses a variety of long-term strategies, including continual identification of high-risk individuals and gangs to target for intervention. This report provides an update of the ongoing monitoring of one long-term CIRV strategy, home visitation.

Home Visit Strategy Overview

Home visits are a collaborative “enhanced supervision” program modeled loosely after Boston’s Operation Night Light (created in 1992), which led to a reduction in homicides in the

mid-1990s (Jordan, 1998; Reichert, 2002). The Cincinnati Police Department (CPD) home visits strategy is a multi-agency collaborative effort that partners the CPD with Hamilton County Adult Probation, Ohio Adult Parole Authority, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms and Explosives (ATF) to deliver the anti-violence message to identified high-risk violent group/gang members under court-mandated supervision.

The “home visit” strategy serves two functions: 1) deliver the CIRV message to offenders who did not attend a call-in, and 2) reiterate the CIRV message with high-risk individuals through repeated contact. Increased contact helps communicate the risks of violence and may help to disrupt any increase in violence that emerges in between call-in sessions. Specifically, law enforcement officials visit the homes of members of known street gangs to discuss the probable consequences for violent behavior. During these informal meetings, supervisees are reminded that law enforcement is focusing on violent gangs and that he/she has been identified as a member of such a group, that social services are available should they desire assistance, and that the community is demanding an end to the violence.

A previous home visit report provided an initial overview of the home visit method for informal message delivery (see Rohleder, Engel, Hall, & Whalen, 2011). From 2008 to 2010, only 209 (25.4%) of the 824 home visit attempts were successful. A large proportion (n=183; 89.0%) of these successful visits resulted in direct contact with the targeted individual. The most common reason for unsuccessful visits was nonexistent addresses (n=361; 58.7%) followed by vacant residences (n=91; 14.8%), and an inability to gain access to the building (n=76; 12.4%). Additionally, home visit attempts were more likely to be successful outside of the CIRV target areas ($\chi^2 = 4.59, p < .05$) due to a higher rate of bad addresses within CIRV target areas ($\chi^2 = 4.16, p < .05$).

These findings led to the conclusion that alternative methods of message delivery should be pursued. Information obtained from street-level patrol and parole/probation officers during on-going gang data collection sessions suggests visits should be expanded to jail and street hangout locations. Given that the target population often spends time away from their “on file” addresses, these locations should increase the frequency of successful contacts and spread the CIRV message of nonviolence. This report provides an overview of the utility of these alternative methods as well.

The home visit approach functions as a narrowly focused, short-term deterrent to complement the other notification methods of CIRV. The present report monitors the enactment of this particular component of CIRV and provides tentative conclusions regarding the efficacy of this strategy. A grant sponsored by the Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services (OCJS) contributed a significant portion of the law enforcement officers’ expenditures associated with this tactic. This report documents the impact of the home visit strategy. For more information about the overall impact of CIRV, please reference Engel et al., 2008, 2009, 2010, and in press.

Methods

Procedure

To determine which violent group/gang members would be targeted for home visits, the CIRV Law Enforcement Team assessed the crime levels within the city, identifying current “hot spots” with the greatest rates of gun-related violence. Next, the gangs associated with these geographic areas were selected to receive home visits. The operational CIRV Law Enforcement Team chose individual targets for visitation. These decisions were based on the reports of probation and parole, CPD’s Safe Streets Unit (formerly Vortex), and beat officers, who

provided knowledge of the current “impact players” that were likely responsible for a substantial amount of the violent offending within the associated areas. Individuals selected for a home visit met three criteria: 1) individual was a member of a violent group or gang; 2) individual was currently under the correctional supervision of the Hamilton County Probation Department or the Ohio Adult Parole Authority; or 3) individual was believed to be an influential member of their group/gang, and actively involved in chronic patterns of violent offending.

Several times per year, law enforcement officials received lists of home visit targets and their known addresses. Uniformed officers attempted to locate the address provided and make face-to-face contact with the targeted offender. If the selected gang member was successfully located, officers aimed to establish a non-threatening dialogue, advising the offender of the missions of CIRV. The individual was left with informational materials and contact information for their future reference. As was the case with the call-in, it was hoped that these offenders would also disperse this information among other members within their gang. When the gang member was not at the targeted residence, officers spoke with family members and neighbors (if available) regarding CIRV, and requested that the information be forwarded to the targeted offender. When the given address was invalid (e.g., incorrect location, vacant building, offender not known to other residents), officers were incapable of completing the home visit. When possible, more accurate contact information for the gang member was sought, and the home visit was rescheduled for another day. In order to avoid visiting invalid addresses officers relied more heavily on visiting offenders at known hangouts rather than their “on file” home address.

Data

Officers recorded their efforts after each home visit attempt. The CIRV Law Enforcement Team compiled this information into a single dataset, documenting both successful and

unsuccessful home visit attempts. The analyses performed include descriptions of the home visits that took place between August 2008 and December 2011 along with a preliminary examination of the impact of this strategy on Cincinnati shootings. The data are based upon 1,306 individual home visit events. Unfortunately, addresses for the home visits conducted in calendar year 2008 are unavailable. Members of the ICS team geocoded the recorded addresses in order to evaluate where home visits were occurring, and which locations were more successful than others. Geocoding is a process of matching recorded addresses to locations in an electronic map. This process is often imperfect due to addresses being recorded incorrectly or the mapping software not having a record of the address. Accordingly, only 1,150 (88.1%) of the home visit attempts were successfully geocoded, including 308 of the 360 successful home visits (85.1%). Therefore, home visits conducted in 2008, and those visits with addresses that could not be geocoded are not included in the geographical analyses presented below.

Home Visit Characteristics

Overall, the CIRV Law Enforcement Team conducted 1,306 home visit attempts, from August 2008 through December 2011. A total of 362 (27.7%) home visits were recorded as successful. Of the 1,306 events, numerous were duplicates; that is, multiple efforts to visit the same individual occurred ($N = 777$, $\bar{x} = 1.68$, $s = .97$). Of these individuals, excluding multiple efforts, 195 (36.6%) were successfully contacted during one of their home visits attempts. The overwhelming majority of targeted gang members were African American (96.0%) and male (96.4%). The ages of supervisees ranged from 11 to 59 years old, with an average age of 26.7 ($s = 6.51$). Notably, there were no significant differences in demographic characteristics or the rate of successful home visits among CIRV target areas.

From August 2008 through December 2011, officers conducted home visits on 140 individual days, with an average of 9.3 ($s = 5.61$) attempts per day. In 2008, a total of 32 home visits were conducted over four days, with 26 (81.3%) resulting in contact with the targeted gang member, spanning 13 known violent gangs. In 2009, 447 home visits occurred on 50 separate days, with 102 visits (22.8%) recorded as successful. These attempts reached 29 gangs across 39 Cincinnati neighborhoods. In 2010¹, 502 home visit attempts took place across 54 days, with 117 (23.3%) resulting in contact with the supervisee. Home visits within this year sought contact with offenders from 32 different gangs spanning 41 neighborhoods. In 2011, 325 home visit attempts took place across 32 days, with 117 (36.0%) resulting in contact with the supervisee. Home visits within this year sought contact with offenders from 31 different gangs spanning 34 neighborhoods.

Findings

Of all cases with identifiable addresses ($N = 1,150$), CPD District Four received the greatest number of home visit attempts throughout the whole study period (34.1%), followed by District Three (24.6%), District One (23.5%), District Five (11.2%), and District Two (6.5%). A total of 45 Cincinnati neighborhoods received home visits. In 2011, Districts One and Four received the most home visit attempts with 36.3% and 34.3%, respectively. The most frequently visited neighborhoods include Over-the-Rhine (136), Avondale (124), Walnut Hills (92), West End (63), East Price Hill (62), and Mount Auburn (59). Finally, of all home visit attempts ($N = 1,306$), a total of 82 violent gangs were contacted. This number exceeds the number of gangs in Cincinnati at any one time due to gang name changes, mergers, and splits. The most frequently

¹ 2010 numbers are updated from the previous report and reflect additional data gathered from CPD.

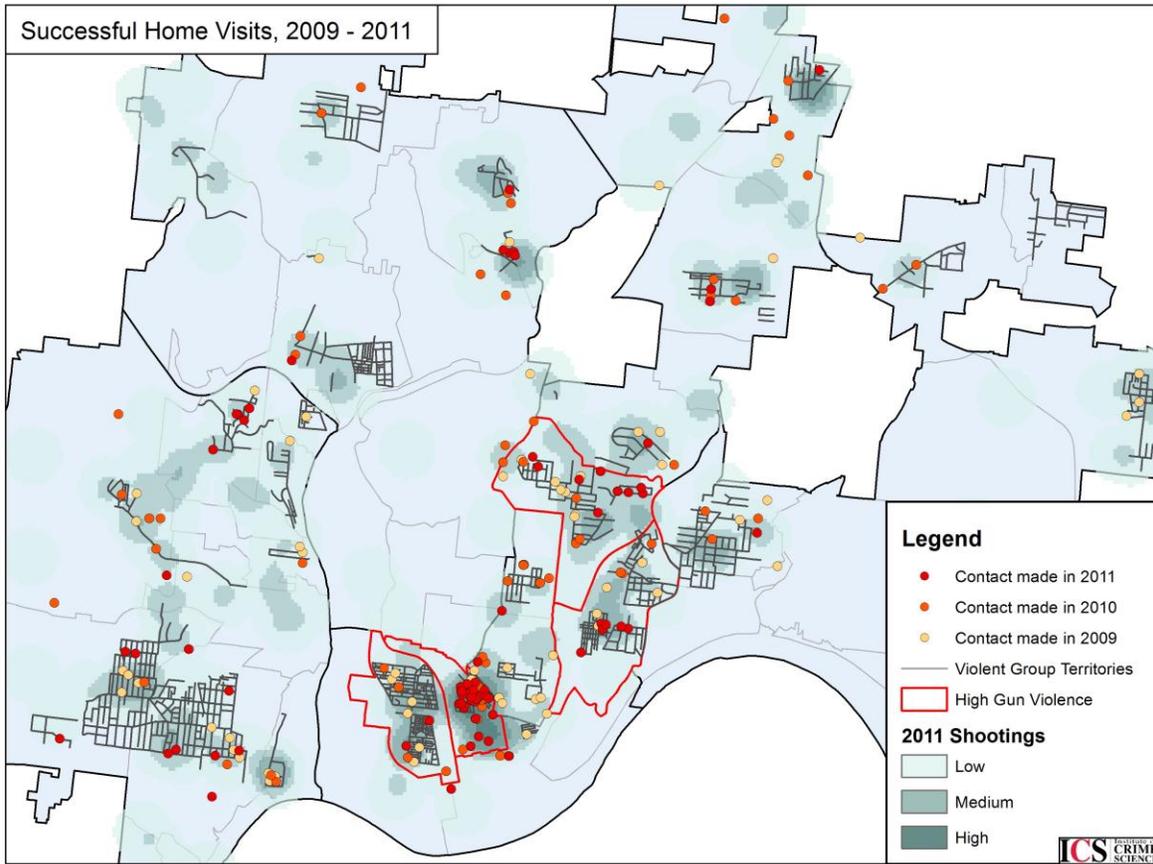
visited gangs included Price Hill (N = 111), East Clifton (71), Burnet & Rockdale/Harvey (70), Young Gunna' Bloods (YGB; 61), and South Avondale (55).

Successful Home Visits

Of the 1,306 attempted home visits, 362 (27.7%) resulted in contact with the targeted gang member. The methods of contact included in-person meetings with the supervisee (n = 278; 76.8%), speaking with the offender's relatives at their confirmed residence (n = 57; 15.7%), in 6 cases (1.7%), the gang member contacted CIRV law enforcement representatives to follow-up at a later date, and in 21 cases the result of the successful contact is miscellaneous (5.8%). On 46 occasions, officers located the selected gang member while in correctional custody and spoke with them at those facilities.

When examining the relationship between violent neighborhoods and successful home visit contacts, there appears to be a high degree of overlap. As seen in Figure 1, 60% of all successful home visits occurred within 1,000 feet of CIRV gang territory. That is, the known violent gang locations housed a large proportion of the successful home visit efforts.

Figure 1: Successful Home Visits, 2009-2011



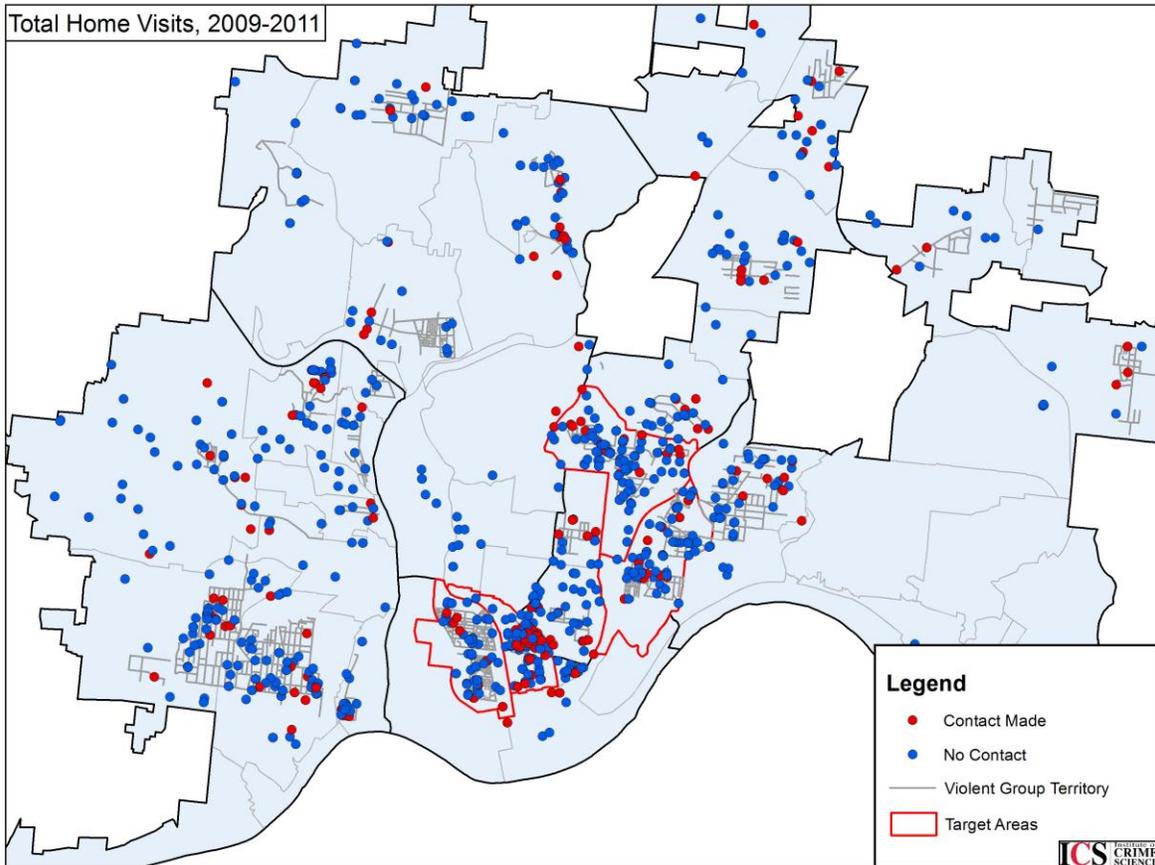
Unsuccessful Home Visits

Comparatively, out of 1,306 total home visit attempts, 944 (72.3%) were unsuccessful. The reasons for failing to contact the targeted gang member included nonexistent addresses (n = 503; 53.3%), vacant residences (n = 132; 14.0%), an inability to gain access to the building (n = 156; 16.53%), change of residence for the offender (n = 55; 5.8%), target did not live at the address (n = 36; 3.81%), target incarcerated (n = 24; 2.5%), and other miscellaneous reasons (n = 38; 4.0%).

As demonstrated in Figure 2, there remained an extremely high rate of unsuccessful home visits throughout the entire city. The highest numbers of unsuccessful contact attempts occurred

in three of the four neighborhoods with the highest gun violence in 2011. Visits to Avondale, Over-the-Rhine, and Walnut Hills resulted in 97, 77, and 75 bad addresses, respectively. This is likely due to the increased amount of visits these areas receive due to their high rates of violence.

Figure 2: Total Home Visits, 2009-2011



Geographical Analyses of High Gun Violence Neighborhoods

In the past, to determine the efficacy of the home visit strategy in relation to reductions in gun violence, the analyses segregated the data by CIRV target area. These geographical areas included neighborhoods identified by the CPD as having high rates of gun-related violence. In 2011, the CPD began taking a citywide approach to the CIRV initiative and did not locate specific CIRV target areas. For that reason, rather than focus on the CIRV target area, the

geographical analysis focuses on the four neighborhoods with the highest amount of gun related violence. These neighborhoods include Over-the-Rhine, West End, Avondale, and Walnut Hills. Below, the correspondence of home visit attempts with fatal and nonfatal shootings is examined for the four neighborhoods.

Overall, contact with the target individuals did not depend on whether they lived in high gun violence neighborhoods ($\chi^2 = .547$). This contradicts the finding from the previous report that home visits were less likely to be successful in target neighborhoods. However, the change in strategy to a more citywide approach may have affected this result. As an alternative method of determining contact success within target areas, a 1,000-foot buffer was placed around CIRV identified territory throughout the city. From 2009 to 2011, the percent of successful contacts made within the CIRV buffer increased by 31.5% while the number of attempts remained relatively stable with 117, 115, and 128 attempts from 2009-2011, respectively. Figure 3 below shows the buffer placed around each gang for the year 2011.

Figure 3: Successful Home Visits with Buffer, 2011

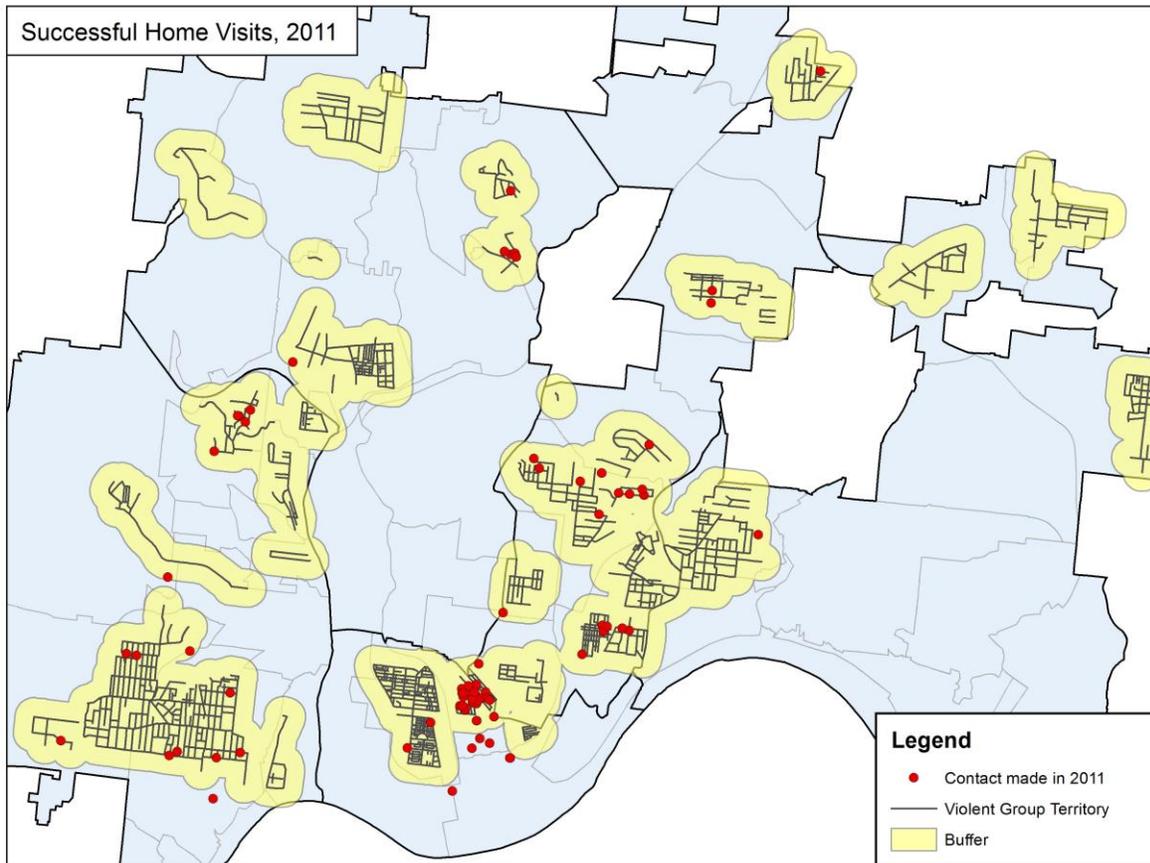


Figure 4 below depicts home visit attempts in Over-the-Rhine and the West End. Out of 136 attempted home visits between 2009 and 2011, 69 (38.6%) were reported to have achieved contact with the targeted gang member. Of visits attempted in 2011, 44 out of 86 were successful (51.2%). A majority of the successful home visits were located in Over-the-Rhine, with 59 successful visits over the whole study period and 42 during 2011. However, there remained a high number of unsuccessful visit attempts in the center of Over-the-Rhine where a large number of shootings occurred.

Figure 4: Over-the-Rhine and West End, Home Visits, 2009-2011

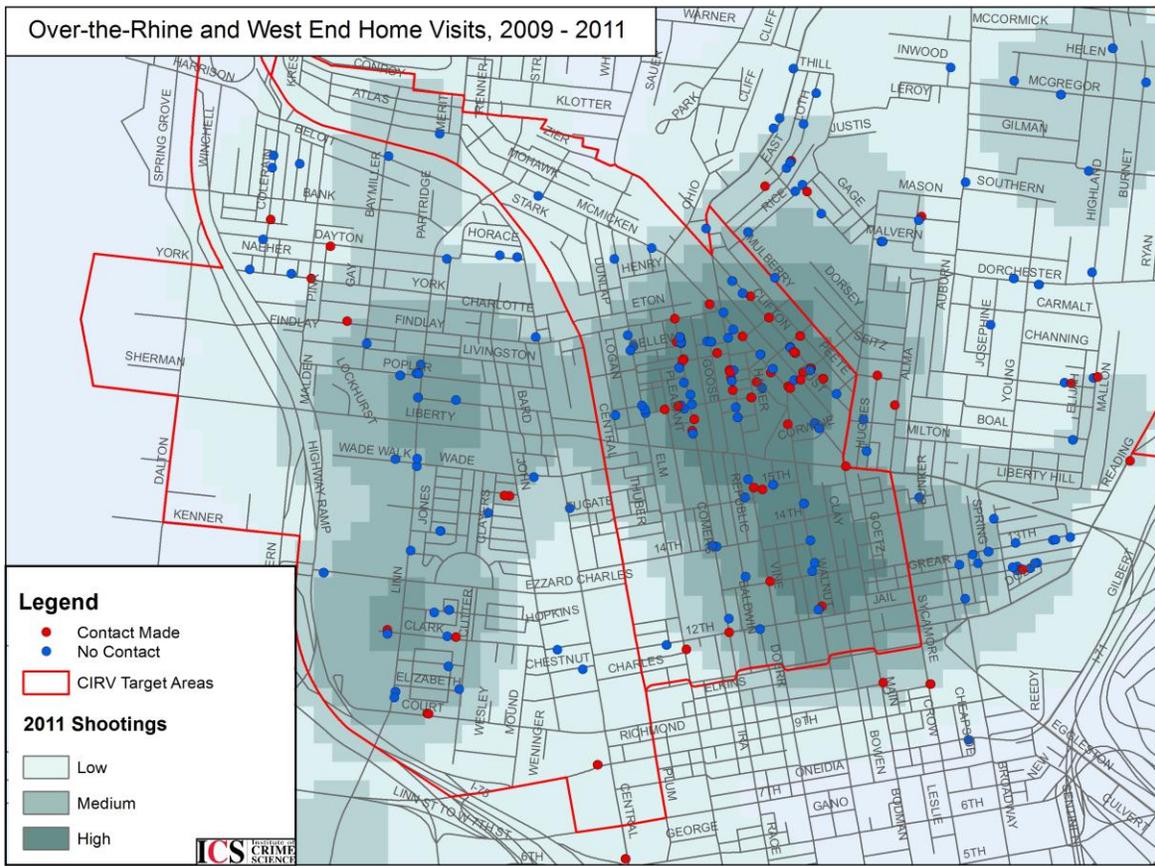
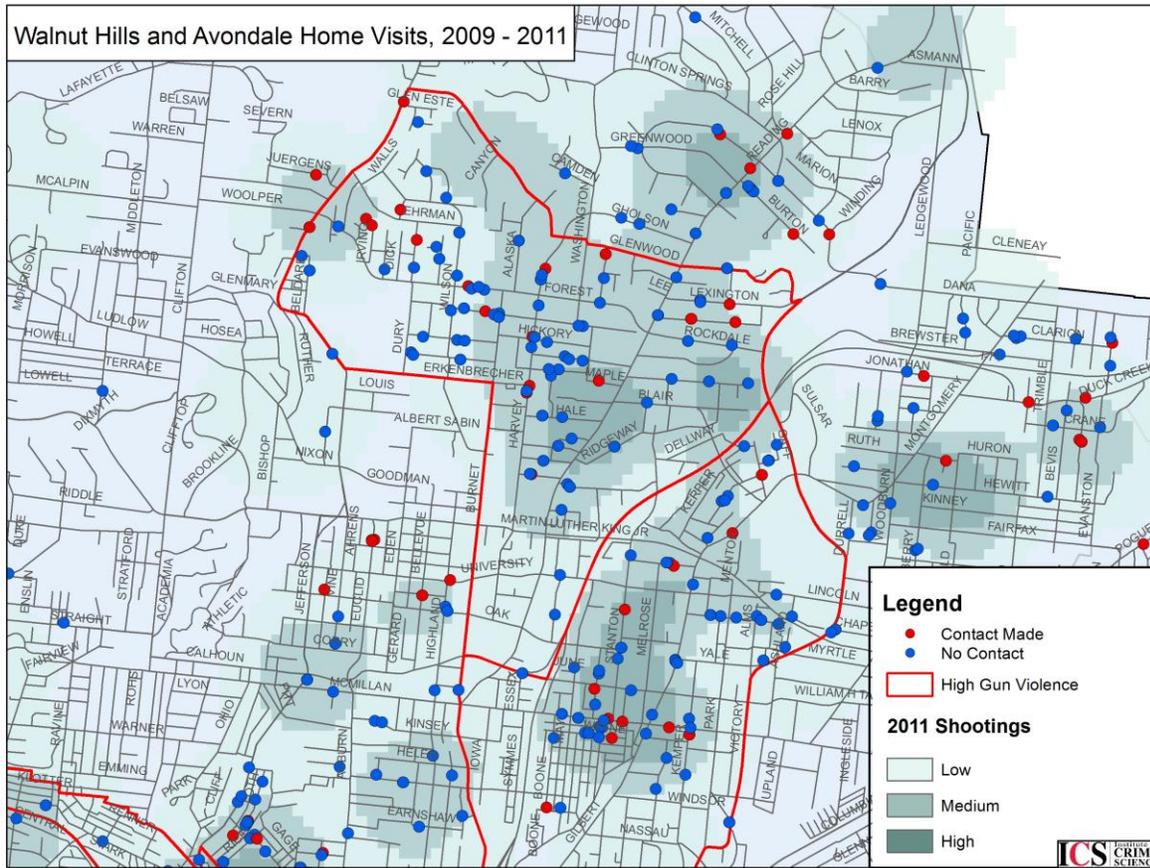


Figure 5 below depicts home visit attempts in Walnut Hills and Avondale. Out of 216 attempted home visits between 2009 and 2011, 44 (20.4%) were reported to have achieved contact with the targeted gang member. Of visits attempted in 2011, 16 out of 64 were successful (25.0%). Of the successful home visits, 61.4% were located in Avondale with 27 successful visits over the whole study period. There remained a high number of unsuccessful visit attempts throughout both neighborhoods.

Figure 5: Walnut Hills and Avondale, Home Visits, 2009-2011



Summary

The focused deterrence approach of CIRV is designed to quickly and dramatically reduce gun violence. However, CIRV also contains built-in mechanisms for sustained reductions over time. A critical part of sustaining positive deterrent effects is through continued and targeted CIRV message dissemination. Identifying influential gang members and targeting them for home visits is one method CIRV uses to increase message delivery. Representatives from the Law Enforcement Team attempted to locate these gang members at their residences to communicate the CIRV messages of nonviolence, police responses to violence, and the availability of services

for those who wish to cease the criminal lifestyle. From August 2008 through December 2011, 1,306 home visits were attempted, with 362 (27.7%) of these events considered successful contacts.

Of the 1,306 events spanning 140 dates from 2008 to 2011, 777 influential gang members were selected to receive a home visit. A total of 82 violent gangs were contacted across 48 Cincinnati neighborhoods. Due to name changes, mergers, and splits between groups, this number of gangs exceeds the number of gangs at any one time. A large number of the successful home visits occurred within neighborhoods with high amounts of gun crime, and home visits were just as likely to be successful in these neighborhoods as in neighborhoods with less gun crime. The overwhelming majority (76.8%) of the successful home visits occurred through face-to-face meetings at the residences of the selected gang members. Of the 944 attempted visits that were unsuccessful (72.3%), the most notable reasons included invalid addresses (53.3%), vacant buildings (14.0%), an inability to gain access to the residential area (16.5%), and addresses where the offender no longer resided (3.8%). Given the high rate of unsuccessful home visits, it is not surprising that these efforts do not appear to correlate with the number of shootings observed within the same timeframe.

Limitations

Unfortunately, incomplete data had to be excluded from the geographical representations shown above. Including cases with missing or nonexistent addresses, this amounted to nearly 12% of the total number of cases. Additionally, the proliferation of inaccurate addresses hampered the ability to locate home visit targets. Continued reliance on “official” address information alone is unlikely to produce a high rate of successful home visits. A similar message delivery strategy conducted in 2009 that involved sending informational letters regarding CIRV

to the homes of known gang members was comparably unsuccessful (see Engel et al., 2009). Of the 272 letters mailed, 126 (46.3%) were returned from the Postal Service as undeliverable. Clearly, attempting to contact this population of offenders is a difficult endeavor. Addresses are often outdated, incomplete, or completely incorrect. Accordingly, future efforts to contact and monitor known violence-prone gang members should be considerably creative and flexible.

Conclusion

In response to the inaccuracy of “on file” addresses, new methods of message dissemination have been implemented. The first new method involves finding target individuals at their known street hang out and delivering the CIRV message there. This also provides an opportunity to deliver the message to other individuals who are with the target individual. The second new method of message delivery involves visiting offenders in the Hamilton County Justice Center. Since this began in 2011, 45 offenders have been successfully advised through this method (12.4% of all successful visits). Another method that is still under consideration involves using gang members’ cellular phones to attempt to establish contact. Given the predominance of incorrect offender addresses, these and other new methods will be critical to law enforcement efforts to disseminate the CIRV message.

Despite its limitations, the home visits strategy provides a critical communication mechanism in between offender notification meetings and important for the continued success of CIRV. Previously, CIRV has demonstrated a statistically significant 41.2% reduction in gang member involved homicides and a 22.3% reduction in nonfatal and fatal shootings at 42 months post-intervention. This indicates sustained reductions in violence are possible with focused deterrence approaches (Engel et al., in press). Still, the continued reduction of violence in Cincinnati requires that the CIRV Law Enforcement Team continue to make contact with

violence-prone individuals. Contacting offenders at known street locations or while they are in jail are promising alternatives that complement the original home visit method and should help increase successful contact rates. In addition, officers assigned to conduct the modified “street visits” are able to gather additional intelligence about gang activity based on their observations while frequenting these high-crime areas.

The efforts of the CIRV Law Enforcement team so far suggests the home visit strategy is a promising method for focused deterrence message dissemination and sustaining reductions in violence. The tactics used to carry out this strategy, however, must be monitored so that the team has information to make adjustments as necessary. Other jurisdictions should determine the feasibility of implementing this type of collaborative, multi-agency supervision approach, and modify it to meet the needs of the communities they serve.

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