



Executive Summary

In 2025, Cities United and End Community Violence Now (ECVN) conducted Delaware's first statewide, comprehensive assessment of the state's efforts to prevent and interrupt gun violence. The report finds that the various projects and initiatives currently function in "parallel tracks"—strong individual programs that are not yet fully linked into a coordinated, statewide system. This assessment serves as a roadmap for community safety and a call to move from short-term projects to long-term "system building."

The Context: Where Delaware Stands Today

Delaware has taken a bold stand by officially recognizing gun violence as a public health crisis. Since 2021, shooting incidents have begun to stabilize, showing that coordinated effort works. However, data from the Delaware Information and Analysis Center (DIAC) and public health records show the challenge remains significant and evolving:

- **A Statewide Challenge:** While much of the historical focus has been on Wilmington, firearm violence affects all three counties. In 2024, 204 shooting incidents occurred in New Castle County, 69 in Kent County, and 55 in Sussex County. In 2025, these totals declined to 185 in New Castle, 57 in Kent, and 49 in Sussex, confirming both a downward trend and a persistent statewide distribution of violence.
- **Concentrated Impact:** Gun violence is not experienced equally across populations. Public health data demonstrates a disproportionate impact on specific demographic groups, reinforcing the need for targeted, data-informed intervention strategies.
- **The Economic and Social Toll:** Beyond the immediate loss of life and injury, gun violence imposes significant long-term social and economic costs on communities, affecting families, systems, and overall community stability.

Wins Across the Landscape

The Delaware safety ecosystem has several bright spots where dedicated partners are already making a difference:

- **Healthcare Intervention:** Hospitals like ChristianaCare reach victims at the bedside through the EVOLV program, providing immediate support to stop the cycle of retaliation.
- **Community Anchors:** Grassroots organizations serve as the "connective tissue" of the streets, acting as trusted mentors and "Community Ambassadors" in the neighborhoods that need them most.
- **High-Risk Intervention:** Delaware's Group Violence Intervention (GVI) Support and Outreach, including the Leaders in Transition (L.I.T.) program, stabilizes individuals at highest risk of involvement in gun violence and supports their transition into credible messengers, contributing to reductions in violence and demonstrating impact in communities such as Sussex County.
- **Faith & Schools:** Local institutions are stepping up with "trauma-responsive" classrooms and churches that serve as centers for healing and restoration.

The Challenge: From Fragmented to Connected

Despite these wins, the work is currently fragmented. Many groups are doing great work in isolation while facing steep hurdles:

- **The "ARPA Cliff":** Many community-based programs have been supported through temporary federal funding, particularly American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) resources. Between 2022 and 2026, more than \$5 million was invested in CVI efforts in Wilmington alone. However, these funds were never intended to be permanent, and no dedicated funding streams currently exist to sustain this work beyond their expiration.
- **Geographic Disparities in Funding:** While Wilmington in New Castle County has received targeted investment, Kent and Sussex counties have not received dedicated government funding for community-based CVI work, despite clear need and existing organizational capacity.
- **Data Fragmentation:** Data relevant to gun violence remains distributed across multiple systems, including law enforcement, healthcare, education, and community organizations. The lack of an integrated data infrastructure limits the state's ability to identify patterns, coordinate responses, and evaluate outcomes effectively.
- **Limited Organizational Capacity:** Many community-based organizations operate within resource-constrained environments, relying on short-term funding and limited administrative infrastructure. This instability makes it difficult to sustain programming, retain staff, and scale effective interventions.

The Vision: A Backbone for Safety

The report's core recommendation is to formally establish ECVN as the statewide "Backbone Organization." Rather than adding a layer of bureaucracy, this creates a central hub to execute the following strategic goals:

- **Coordinate Funding:** Establish stable, multi-year funding streams that allow community-based organizations to sustain operations and expand impact across all three counties.
- **Strengthen Intervention Capacity:** Expand support for organizations working directly with individuals at highest risk of violence, including the development of 24/7 crisis response models

connected to healthcare systems.

- **Expand Statewide Access:** Ensure that communities in Kent and Sussex counties receive equitable investment and access to community-based prevention and intervention strategies.
- **Build Data Infrastructure:** Develop a statewide, integrated gun violence data system to improve coordination, transparency, and evidence-based decision-making across sectors.
- **Establish a Mini-Grant Program:** Create a streamlined funding stream (\$5,000–\$10,000) to support smaller, community-based prevention and trauma services.
- **Support Community-Led Solutions:** Invest in community-based organizations as essential partners in public safety, recognizing their role in prevention, intervention, and long-term community stabilization.

Delaware has demonstrated both progress and commitment in addressing gun violence through community-based strategies. However, the current system remains fragmented and dependent on short-term resources. A coordinated, sustained investment in community violence intervention and data infrastructure is essential to building on existing progress and achieving long-term reductions in violence. By aligning resources, strengthening systems, and supporting community-led solutions, Delaware can move from reactive responses toward a comprehensive, statewide strategy for safety and prevention.

Conclusion

This roadmap highlights the critical need for a coordinated and sustained effort to address gun violence in Delaware. By establishing a backbone organization, securing stable funding, and prioritizing community-led solutions, Delaware can build a safer future for all its residents.