

# Intentional Investment

in Delaware's CVI Ecosystem  
and where it can take us





# Table of Contents

- Executive Summary ..... 1
- The Scope of the Crisis in Delaware..... 3
- The Cost of Gun Violence ..... 8
- Lessons Learned ..... 10
- Recommendations for Sustained and Expanded Success..... 17
  - A Comprehensive Investment Strategy..... 17
  - What Sustained Investment Looks Like in Practice ..... 18
  - Shared Commitments and Accountability ..... 19
- Conclusion..... 20

# Executive Summary

Gun-related incidents and deaths continue to affect every corner of Delaware. While Wilmington has returned to pre-pandemic levels—still disproportionately high on a per-capita basis—the sharp increases in Kent and Sussex Counties highlight an escalating crisis that is devastating families, destabilizing neighborhoods, and threatening the overall well-being of communities across the state.

The human toll of gun violence is profound, but the consequences extend even further. In Delaware, the economic cost of gun deaths is estimated at \$1.3 billion each year, or roughly \$1,236 for every resident in the state.<sup>1</sup> These costs are borne through medical expenses, lost productivity, criminal justice expenditures, and the long-term social impacts on communities traumatized by violence.<sup>1</sup>

In response to this urgent crisis, Delaware has made strategic investments in Community Violence Intervention (“CVI”) programs in recent years. CVI programs are customized intervention services for the small population of individuals at the highest risk of engaging in violence. In FY2024 and FY2025, resources were directed toward high-need areas, most notably in Wilmington and later philanthropic investments were made in West Laurel, to support evidence-based approaches such as outreach, conflict mediation, and wraparound services. Early outcomes show that these targeted investments are working: in neighborhoods where CVI initiatives are active, gun deaths have declined.<sup>2</sup>

However, progress remains uneven. Communities that have not yet benefited from intentional, sustained investment continue to experience rising gun violence. To build on the success seen in pilot areas and ensure that life-saving programs reach every community in need, Delaware requires an additional \$5 million investment for FY2027 to be dispersed over 3 years.

This investment is not only a moral imperative; it is a sound fiscal strategy. Strengthening and expanding CVI programs will continue to save lives, reduce costs, and foster safer, more resilient communities across the state.

This report will explore Delaware’s trends in gun deaths and the investment in life-saving programs, and argue that Delaware must invest \$5 million (or \$4.75 per resident) to expand this progress and continue to save lives and money.

This report accompanies a [letter](#) to the Governor and General Assembly as part of our CVI coalition’s budget request.

<sup>1</sup> Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions. (n.d.). State data: Delaware. Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Retrieved November 25, 2025, from <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/center-for-gun-violence-solutions/gun-violence-data/state-gun-violence-data/delaware>

<sup>2</sup> DelawareBlack. (2025, November 24). Crime trends: Laurel, DE has reported zero shootings and homicides to date for 2025. DelawareBlack. <https://delawareblack.com/crime-trends-laurel-de-has-reported-zero-shootings-and-homicides-to-date-for-2025/>

# GUN VIOLENCE COST PER RESIDENT

Current Annual Cost: **\$1,236**

*In Delaware, the economic cost of gun deaths is estimated at \$1.3 billion each year*



Current Request Cost: **\$4.75**

*In Delaware, the investment needed to reduce gun violence is about \$4.75 per resident.*

# The Scope of the Crisis in Delaware

Delaware has experienced a persistent gun violence crisis for more than a decade. The issue drew national attention in 2014 when Wilmington was labeled “Murder Town USA” in a 2014 Newsweek article. The state continues to face severe challenges, with one individual killed by a firearm approximately every three days.<sup>3</sup>

Gun violence in Delaware is highly concentrated in communities that have faced longstanding historical disinvestment. Notably, young Black males aged 15–34, who represent only 3% of the state’s population, accounted for 40% of all gun homicide fatalities in 2023.<sup>3</sup>

## Gun Violence Through The Years:

### Pre-pandemic (2014-2019):

During this period, much of the state’s violence was driven by incidents in Wilmington, the state’s largest city. In 2013, Wilmington, with a population slightly exceeding 71,000, recorded a violent crime rate of 1,625 incidents per 100,000 residents, as reported in the FBI’s *Uniform Crime Report* for that year. This figure significantly exceeded the national average of 368 incidents per 100,000 residents.<sup>4</sup> According to analysis by the *Wilmington News Journal*, Wilmington ranked third in violent crime among 450 comparably sized U.S. cities, close behind Saginaw and Flint, Michigan.<sup>5</sup>

### During the pandemic (2020-2022):

As seen across the nation, Delaware saw a massive increase in gun violence during the Covid-19 pandemic. Nationally, gun violence rates were 30% higher between March 1, 2020, and March 31, 2021 (during the pandemic), compared to the same period in 2019.<sup>6</sup>

Even though overall crime in Delaware’s largest city saw a downward trend in 2020, incidents of gun violence remained stubbornly high. Total crime in Wilmington was down 6% compared to 2019, but shooting incidents were up 52% and homicides increased 35%.<sup>7</sup>

### Post-pandemic (2022-Current):

As the state began to stabilize after the pandemic, Wilmington saw gun violence trends recede to pre-pandemic levels, while Kent and Sussex saw increases in gun violence.

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3 Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions. (n.d.). State data: Delaware. Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Retrieved November 25, 2025, from <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/center-for-gun-violence-solutions/gun-violence-data/state-gun-violence-data/delaware>

4 Federal Bureau of Investigation. (2014). *Crime in the United States, 2013*. U.S. Department of Justice. <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2013/crime-in-the-u.s.-2013/summary-2013/2013-cius-summary-final.pdf>

5 Jones, A. (2014, December 19). Murder town USA (aka Wilmington, Delaware). Newsweek. <https://www.newsweek.com/2014/12/19/wilmington-delaware-murder-crime-290232.html> Jones, A. (2014, December 19). Murder town USA (aka Wilmington, Delaware). Newsweek. <https://www.newsweek.com/2014/12/19/wilmington-delaware-murder-crime-290232.html>

6 Ssentongo, P., Fronterre, C., Ssentongo, A. E., Advani, S., Heilbrunn, E. S., Hazelton, J. P., Oh, J. S., McCall-Hosenfeld, J. S., & Chinchilli, V. M. (2021). Gun violence incidence during the COVID-19 pandemic is higher than before the pandemic in the United States. *Scientific reports*, 11(1), 20654. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-021-98813-z>

7 Eichmann, M. (2021, February 2). Wilmington shootings up 50% in 2020, case clearance drops amid pandemic. WHYY. <https://whyy.org/articles/wilmington-shootings-up-50-in-2020-case-clearance-drops-amid-pandemic/>

In Wilmington, the heightened investments began to pay off. At the end of 2023, homicides in Wilmington had declined by more than 50% since the pandemic, and were at a five-year low.<sup>8</sup>

In Wilmington’s crime statistics report for 2024, it was reported that shootings were at their lowest in six years and that crime was down 21% from the previous year. Despite a 71% increase (14 to 24) in homicides from 2023 to 2024, homicides had decreased 31% between 2017 (the first year of the Purzycki Mayoral administration) and 2024.<sup>9</sup>

As of 2025, shootings were down to pre-pandemic levels. In 2025, Wilmington saw a 21% decline in shooting incidents and a 20% decline in murders compared to 2024. In Wilmington in 2025, youth made up 18% of shooting incidents and 13% of shooting victims.<sup>10</sup>

As gun violence in Wilmington declined, it increased in Kent and Sussex Counties, where they saw unprecedented incidents of gun violence. In fact, Kent County’s homicide rate has been higher than that of New Castle during two of the previous three years.<sup>10</sup>

In Dover, the state’s capital located within Kent County, homicides rose from two to six within one year (from 2023 to 2024). In both 2023 and 2024, there were 46 shooting incidents.<sup>10</sup>

In 2023, the town of Laurel, located within Sussex County, experienced three homicides within the span of six months.

After a heavy spike in Sussex, investments were made into collective impact models of intervention, and in 2025, **Laurel is down to zero homicides and shootings.**

Public officials cite that the decrease in violence can be attributed to intentional investments into collaborative agency efforts, intelligence-led policing, and trust-based partnerships with community organizations and members.<sup>10</sup>

Firearm Assault  
Deaths/Homicides (Statewide)



*This graph illustrates a clear pattern: when investments are made intentionally, measurable reductions in violence follow.*

8 State of Delaware News. (2024, January 29). AG Jennings, law enforcement leaders announce record low violent crime rates. News Delaware. <https://news.delaware.gov/2024/01/29/ag-jennings-law-enforcement-leaders-announce-record-low-violent-crime-rates/>

9 Wilmington Police Department. (n.d.). 2024 Year-End Report. <https://www.wilmingtonde.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/12732/638743610622100000>

10 Parra. E. (2025, February 11). Why Delaware shootings are down to pre-pandemic levels – What’s driving this. Delaware Online. <https://www.delawareonline.com/story/news/crime/2025/02/11/delaware-shootings-down-to-pre-pandemic-levels-whats-driving-this/77491393007/>

**Table 1: Fatal and Non-Fatal Shootings By Year in Wilmington**

Year	Wilmington
○ 2019	89
▲ 2020	112
▼ 2021	91
▼ 2022	83
▲ 2023	91
▼ 2024	81
▼ 2025	48

Access to timely shooting data is limited statewide; Wilmington is the sole jurisdiction with current data, enabled by its investment in CompStat.

**Table 2: Firearm Assault Deaths/Homicides By Year and Wilmington and Statewide**

Year	Wilmington	Statewide
○ 2019	14	42
▲ 2020	32	75
▲ 2021	39	79
▼ 2022	18	41
▼ 2023	14	--
▲ 2024	24	--
▼ 2025	17	--

**Table 3: Firearm Deaths By Year by County (Includes Homicide & Suicide)**

Year	New Castle	Kent	Sussex	Statewide
○ 2019	61	15	18	94
▲ 2020	89	26	24	139
▲ 2021	94	33	31	158
▼ 2022	64	27	30	121

This information is gathered via publicly available data, which is limited in Delaware. In Wilmington, the Police Department invests in publishing gun violence data on a weekly basis, using CompStat. No other Police Departments are publishing real-time, transparent data related to gun violence in their communities. This underscores the need for a timely and transparent infrastructure for gun violence data and reporting in Delaware.



Reliable, timely, and consistent data is essential for understanding and responding to Delaware’s escalating gun violence crisis. While Wilmington’s weekly CompStat reports provide a valuable model for near–real-time transparency, most jurisdictions across the state do not publish comparable data. As a result, residents, community partners, policymakers, and current and prospective investors lack a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of where violence is occurring, how patterns are shifting, and whether interventions are producing results.

This absence of standardized, statewide reporting limits Delaware’s ability to:

- Identify emerging hotspots and shifts in violence patterns
- Evaluate the effectiveness of Community Violence Intervention (CVI) strategies
- Coordinate responses across jurisdictions and systems
- Allocate resources and investments where they are most urgently needed

As Delaware expands its investments in CVI programs, the lack of a shared data infrastructure undermines accountability, learning, and life-saving potential.

### **Regional Models Demonstrate What Is Possible –**

Neighboring states have already taken steps to address this gap through public-facing data systems that improve transparency and coordination.

- Maryland maintains a provisional statewide gun violence dashboard, allowing the public and decision-makers to track trends, locations, and outcomes in near real time. This approach supports rapid response, informed policymaking, and public accountability, even as data continues to be refined.<sup>11</sup>
- Pennsylvania publicly highlights its violence prevention investments and outcomes through online dashboards and reporting tools, increasing transparency around where resources are being deployed and how they align with statewide public safety priorities.<sup>12</sup>

These models demonstrate that accessible, statewide violence data is achievable and that transparency strengthens—not weakens—public trust and investment.

11 Maryland Department of Health. (n.d.). *Firearm violence data*. Maryland Department of Health. Retrieved January 8, 2026, from <https://health.maryland.gov/violence-prevention/Pages/Data.aspx>

12 Esri. (n.d.). *Gun Violence and VIP Grants [Interactive dashboard]*. ArcGIS Online. Retrieved January 8, 2026, from <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/bb47bf83b7f64a519fae4abd01c29abc>

## Delaware Has Already Led with Data-Driven Public Health Infrastructure –

Delaware itself has set a powerful precedent for using data, coordination, and systems design to address complex public health crises.

**In 2018, Delaware established the nation’s first overdose care system.<sup>13</sup>**

That legislation:

- Created standards for stabilization centers to ensure continuity of care beyond emergency response
- Required coordination across first responders, hospitals, behavioral health providers, and state agencies
- Enabled improved data sharing and analysis between overdose incidents and prescription monitoring systems
- Treated substance use disorder as a public health issue requiring system-level intervention, not episodic response

This framework recognized a critical truth: without coordinated data and shared infrastructure, even well-intentioned interventions fall short. Delaware’s overdose care system illustrates how statewide data alignment can improve outcomes, accountability, and long-term impact.

## Applying This Lesson to Gun Violence Prevention –

Gun violence, like overdose, is a complex, cross-system crisis with profound human and economic costs. Establishing a credible, consistent, and publicly accessible statewide gun violence data system would build on Delaware’s existing leadership and align with best practices across the region.

Such a data system, ideally managed by Delaware’s Division of Public Health, would:

- Support evidence-based decision-making and continuous improvement
- Enable coordinated action across law enforcement, public health, education, and community partners
- Increase transparency for residents, funders, and policymakers
- Strengthen accountability for investments in CVI programs
- Ensure that life-saving strategies reach the communities most affected

A statewide gun violence data infrastructure is therefore not a technical add-on, but a foundational investment in public safety, public health, and good governance. As Delaware deepens its commitment to community-based violence prevention, building this data capacity is essential to ensuring that strategies are effective, equitable, and responsive to real-time conditions on the ground.

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<sup>13</sup> State of Delaware. (2018, September 10). Governor Carney signs package of legislation to combat addiction epidemic. Delaware.gov. Retrieved January 8, 2026, from <https://news.delaware.gov/2018/09/10/governor-carney-signs-package-legislation-combat-addiction-epidemic/>

# The Cost of Gun Violence

Gun violence ravages families, communities, and economies. The human cost is shattering— lives altered, families forever changed. Not only does this pose a threat to social wellbeing, but it is expensive.

A single shooting incident can cost anywhere from \$275,000 to \$1.2 million.<sup>14</sup> The lower estimate reflects the immediate and long-term expenses paid by taxpayers for one gun death, including police response, emergency medical care, and related criminal justice and government services. The higher estimate accounts for a wider range of costs, such as lost tax revenue, incarceration expenses, and victim support services.

## Nationally, taxpayers, survivors, families, and businesses pay for the cost of violence <sup>15</sup>

**\$1.34 billion**  
Society's Daily Cost

**\$30.19 million**  
Police and Criminal  
Justice Daily Cost

**\$7.79 million**  
Healthcare Daily Cost

**\$1.47 million**  
Employers' Daily Cost

Society loses \$1.34 billion daily in quality-of-life costs from the suffering and lost well-being of gun violence victims and their families.<sup>15</sup>

American taxpayers pay \$30.16 million every day in police and criminal justice costs for investigation, prosecution, and incarceration.

Taxpayers, survivors, families, and employers pay an average of \$7.79 million daily in health care costs, including immediate and long-term medical and mental health care, plus patient transportation/ambulance costs related to gun violence, and lose an estimated \$147.32 million per day related to work missed due to injury or death.

Employers lose an average of \$1.47 million on a daily basis in productivity, revenue, and costs required to recruit and train replacements for victims of gun violence.

<sup>14</sup> Everytown for Gun Safety. (2024, November 8). *The economic cost of gun violence*. Everytown Research & Policy. <https://everytownresearch.org/report/the-economic-cost-of-gun-violence/>

<sup>15</sup> Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund. (2024, November 8). *The economic cost of gun violence*. Everytown Research & Policy. <https://everytownresearch.org/report/the-economic-cost-of-gun-violence/>

In Delaware, the annual economic burden of gun violence is estimated at approximately \$1.3 billion, representing a cost of \$1,236 per resident.<sup>16</sup> In 2023 alone, the state incurred \$510.05 million in expenses associated with firearm-related homicides; this excludes the substantial costs arising from the immediate and long-term responses to non-fatal shooting incidents.<sup>17</sup>

Investing in community gun violence prevention and intervention is both a moral obligation and a fiscally responsible choice.



The staggering costs associated with gun violence, borne by taxpayers, families, and communities, underscore that inaction is far more expensive than intervention. Proven, evidence-based strategies such as community violence intervention and prevention programs, hospital-based outreach, and expanded access to mental and behavioral health services not only save lives but also reduce the financial strain on public resources. For every dollar invested in prevention, communities can save several dollars in medical, policing, and criminal justice expenses.

By prioritizing prevention and investing in these initiatives, Delaware can protect its residents, strengthen communities, and redirect millions of dollars currently spent on the aftermath of violence toward building a safer and more prosperous future.



*“More should go into the prevention of gun violence rather than into its aftermath. It is smarter and a better return on investment, especially when the models are proven to work.”*

— Cammerin Norwood, Executive Director of Our R.O.O.T.S Foundation

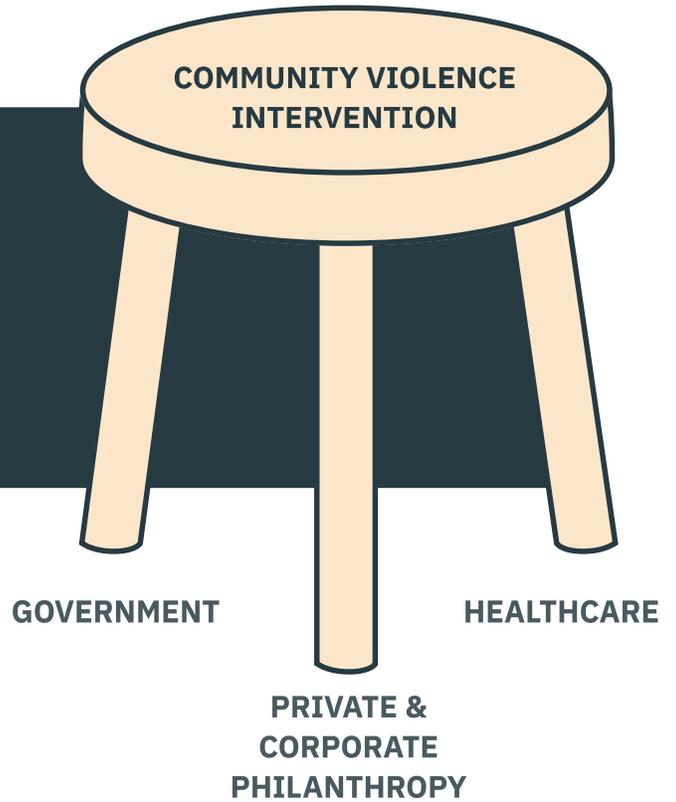
16 Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions. (n.d.). State data: Delaware. Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. Retrieved November 25, 2025, from <https://publichealth.jhu.edu/center-for-gun-violence-solutions/gun-violence-data/state-gun-violence-data/delaware>

17 WISQARS. (2021). National Violent Death Reporting System (NVDRS). <https://wisqars.cdc.gov/nvdrs/>

# Lessons Learned: Targeted Interventions are Yielding Reductions in Violence

To address the urgent gun violence impacting Delaware communities, early, targeted investments were made in areas with the greatest demonstrated need, including Wilmington and West Laurel.

From the outset, this work was designed as a shared, three-part investment model, bringing together government, private and corporate philanthropy, and healthcare.



To date, philanthropic partners have played a leading role in launching and sustaining these efforts, helping to establish proof of concept and demonstrate what is possible when resources are aligned around community-driven solutions.

Importantly, communities that have received sustained investment are already seeing meaningful returns. Gun violence has declined by as much as 31 percent in these areas, underscoring that intentional, coordinated investment works—saving lives and strengthening neighborhoods.<sup>18</sup>

These early results create a strong foundation and a clear opportunity to broaden participation across sectors, scale what is working, and ensure that successful approaches are sustained statewide.

18 Parra, E. (2025, January 8). Wilmington shootings at their lowest in 6 years, city report says. Delaware Online. <https://www.delawareonline.com/story/news/crime/2025/01/08/wilmington-shootings-at-their-lowest-in-6-years-city-report-says/77515422007/>



## Wilmington

In 2014, Wilmington was named Murder Town USA and had more overall violent crimes based on population than any other small city (1,703 per 100,000 people) (Philadelphia Magazine, 2014).<sup>19</sup>

To address the heightened violence in Wilmington, investments were made into various agencies and programs. The State of Delaware invested in Group Violence Intervention (GVI), which is housed in Delaware's Department of Health and Social Services, ChristianaCare invested in their Hospital-based Violence Intervention Program titled Empowering Victims of Lived Violence (EVOLV), and Wilmington Police Department invested in enhanced and innovative law enforcement strategies.

GVI is a partnership between the state's Division of Social Services and law enforcement. GVI is a national model that "reduces homicide and gun violence, minimizes harm to communities by replacing enforcement with deterrence, and fosters stronger relationships between law enforcement and the people they serve".<sup>20</sup> In the GVI model, community members with influence over group members "deliver a credible moral message against violence", law enforcement "puts groups on prior notice about the consequences" of continued group violence, and support and outreach providers provide genuine offers of support and resources.<sup>17</sup> GVI operates with the notion that a very small group of people drive violence, and focuses efforts on those at highest risk of exposure to gun violence, as a victim or perpetrator. This partnership between credible community members, law enforcement, and support and outreach "fosters internal social pressure within groups that deters violence, elevates clear community standards against violence, offers group members an 'honorable exit' from committing acts of violence, provides a supported path for those who want to change, and reserves strategic, group-based sanctions only for situations where group-involved serious violence persists".<sup>17</sup>

In Delaware, GVI has played a key role in linking individuals to critical social supports, including housing stability services, mental health care, and assistance with social service benefits and identification. The following testimonial highlights the direct impact of this program through the firsthand experience of a participant.

<sup>19</sup> Fiorillo, V. (2014, March 27). Report: Wilmington most dangerous small city in country. Philadelphia Magazine. <https://www.phillymag.com/news/2014/03/27/report-wilmington-dangerous-small-city-country/>

<sup>20</sup> National Network for Safe Communities. (n.d.). Group Violence Intervention. NNS Communities. <https://nnscommunities.org/strategies/group-violence-intervention/>

## A Member's Story

*I grew up in Wilmington, Delaware, raised by a single mother with my two brothers. I was the middle child, but the only girl, which forced me to mature quickly. Because of my mother's addictions and personal struggles, I took on responsibilities at a young age—many of the things she was unable to do. I always had intelligence and potential, but I began using it for the wrong reasons.*

*By the time I was around 13—maybe even younger—I started running the streets. I was doing things no one would ever imagine from a young lady, but I didn't even see myself as one. I didn't carry myself with value because I didn't believe I had any. I was stealing, robbing, using drugs, and eventually became more comfortable outside than at home. My friends became my family, and I truly believed that was all life had to offer me.*

*I was arrested as a juvenile and did my first real bid in 2015, spending two years incarcerated. I came home at the end of 2017, but I still hadn't learned. I went right back to what I knew. In 2019, I was arrested again and signed papers as a habitual offender. I was sentenced to more probation, and that's when everything began to change.*

*That's when I met **John Cook from GVI**.*

*John told me he could help me build my credit, find housing, gain employment, and get therapy. Honestly, I didn't trust him. I had heard promises before—services that never came through, people who disappeared once things got hard. But John was different. He called me every single day. If I made excuses, he would come pick me up himself. We sat down and reviewed my credit score, and he even took me to open an account to help me build credit. We made real plans. We set goals. And most importantly—he stayed consistent.*

*Through GVI, I met **Mrs. Gloria**. She helped me get my food stamps, but more than that, her presence was genuine. Her energy, her conversation—you could feel the love. She truly cared.*

*I got a job at a hotel, and in March 2020, when I showed John my first paystub, I was approved for my **first apartment**. For the first time in my life, I felt stable. I had peace. I could breathe. I had my own space. Life finally felt different—and even when things were going well, John and Mrs. Gloria still checked on me every day.*

*Then COVID happened.*

*In 2021, I lost three close friends back-to-back—two in April and one in July. That loss broke me. I fell into the darkest place I had ever been. I was drinking, abusing medication—anything to numb the pain. The only thing that pulled me out of that place was **GVI**.*

*Mrs. Gloria and John Cook came to my home one day while I was passed out asleep. That same day, they put me in the car and took me to the new building on Lea Boulevard. I'll never forget sitting at that table—crying, talking, and finally feeling heard. People were listening to me. They cared.*

*GVI helped me out of depression. They connected me to therapy. They helped me get into the Division of Social Services through a temp agency. I started weekly meetings with Mrs. Gloria, and slowly, structure returned to my life.*

*Today, I am proud to say that I am now a **Merit Employee with the Division of Social Services**. I have my own place. I am enrolled in the **First-Time Homebuyers Program**. I have custody of my nephew. My mind is clear. My life is peaceful.*

*I no longer have to look over my shoulder. I don't worry about going back to the streets or going back to jail. My credit score has increased, and I now have knowledge in areas of life I never thought I would understand. I see life differently.*

*I am now a participant in **LIT with GVI**, and I am able to give back—to pass along the same knowledge and support that was given to me to the youth in my community. And it feels good to do so.*

*Writing this made me truly reflect on how far I've come.*

***GVI didn't just help me survive—they helped me build a life.***

- GVI Leaders In Transition (LIT) Member

As of 2022, the state had invested more than \$1.5 million into GVI (Delaware Criminal Justice Council).<sup>21</sup>



*“Delaware’s investment in Group Violence Intervention has contributed to meaningful progress helping reduce shootings, strengthening partnerships, and supporting families and communities working to heal. I am grateful for the commitment shown by state leaders, agencies, and community partners who have supported this work.*

*The progress in Wilmington demonstrates that when we invest in people, we improve outcomes. Behind every statistic is a mother, a family, and a community whose future matters, and GVI’s focused, compassionate approach provides real support, accountability, and hope for those at the highest risk.*

*Continued and expanded funding is a responsible and collaborative step toward protecting the progress we’ve begun and bringing these life-saving strategies to every community in Delaware.”*

— GVI Support & Outreach Director, John Cook

ChristianaCare, home to Delaware’s level one trauma center, funds their own Hospital-based Violence Intervention Program called Empowering Victims of Lived Violence (EVOLV). ChristianaCare works at the brink of health equity and community health to catalyze community health impact; and EVOLV exists to create a single clinical care team around victims of gun violence, using evidence-based synergistic strategies. EVOLV aims to provide navigation support to patients impacted by community violence post-discharge. Once admitted, an EVOLV Community Health Worker (CHW) provides immediate bedside intervention, and up to six months of case management post-discharge. The patient’s assigned CHW assists in a magnitude of services such as connecting to community resources, while working on the patient’s identified needs and addressing social determinants of health that impacts health and well-being.

In addition to ChristianaCare’s investment into EVOLV, the program received \$200,000 from the Criminal Justice Council between 2023 and now.

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<sup>21</sup> Delaware Criminal Justice Council. (n.d.). News & information. State of Delaware. Retrieved November 25, 2025, from <https://cjc.delaware.gov/news/>



To address the gun violence epidemic, the Wilmington Police Department (WPD) has made significant investments in innovative technology and intelligence-led policing. WPD uses a collaborative approach by meeting with various agencies (Delaware Health and Social Services, Group Violence Intervention, Delaware Department of Justice, US Attorney’s Office, etc.) as frequently as weekly to discuss shooting incidents and responses. WPD invests heavily in transparent data sharing, uploading CompStat reports so that the public can access all crime data on a weekly basis. The WPD also has a state of the art Crime Gun Intelligence Center (CGIC), which is a partnership with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. Using innovative technology and intelligence to “link firearm evidence, investigate gun crimes, and identify offenders”. The CGIC’s goal is to “reduce gun violence by effectively tracking and prosecuting gun offenders, removing illegal firearms from the streets, and improving public safety”.<sup>22</sup>

These collaborative, multi-sector efforts have contributed to gun violence reductions in Wilmington. At the end of 2023, homicides in Wilmington had declined by more than 50% since the pandemic, and were at a five-year low.<sup>23</sup>

In Delaware’s crime statistics report for 2024, it was reported that shootings were at their lowest in six years and that crime was down 21% from the previous year. Despite a 71% increase (14 to 24) in homicides from 2023 to 2024, homicides had decreased 31% between 2017 (the first year of the Purzycki Mayoral administration) and 2024.<sup>24</sup>

**In 2025, Wilmington saw a 21% decline in shooting incidents and a 20% decline in murders compared to 2024.<sup>25</sup>**

22 City of Wilmington, Delaware. (n.d.). WPD public safety plan and strategies. [Wilmington.gov](https://www.wilmingtonde.gov/government/public-safety/wilmington-police-department/wpd-public-safety-plan-and-strategies). Retrieved November 25, 2025, from <https://www.wilmingtonde.gov/government/public-safety/wilmington-police-department/wpd-public-safety-plan-and-strategies>

23 State of Delaware News. (2024, January 29). AG Jennings, law enforcement leaders announce record low violent crime rates. News Delaware. <https://news.delaware.gov/2024/01/29/ag-jennings-law-enforcement-leaders-announce-record-low-violent-crime-rates/>

24 Wilmington Police Department. (n.d.). 2024 Year-End Report. <https://www.wilmingtonde.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/12732/638743610622100000>

25 City of Wilmington. (2026). Wilmington Police Department 2025 year-end report. <https://www.wilmingtonde.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/13762/639038177796500000>

## West Laurel

Laurel is the state's poorest city, with 35.72% of its residents living in poverty. The average income is \$31,329, and the average household income is \$44,593 (36% below the state median).<sup>26</sup>

In 2023, three young adults were killed in a six-month period in the small town. Laurel has the highest crime rate in the state, with 1,652 violent crimes per 100,000 people (State of Delaware News).

Operation West Laurel (OWL) is a local organization that was formed after the death of Corey Mumford, the first of the three young adults killed in a six month span.

In response to the dire need for intervention and prevention services in Sussex County, specifically Laurel, OWL received philanthropic investments totaling \$95,000 between 2023 and 2025.

OWL utilizes trauma-informed, evidence-based programs rooted in Positive Youth Development (PYD) and public health strategies. It targets the root social, emotional, academic, and economic drivers of violence. The OWL Project includes two integrated prevention and intervention components, both focused on early engagement, healing, academic support, and skill-building to disrupt violence and promote resilience.

Students Overcoming Adversity and Rising (SOAR) is a trauma-informed prevention program for children in second through sixth grade who have been chronically exposed to violence. The participants have witnessed homicides, heard gunfire, and in some cases, lost loved ones to gun violence. Despite this, these youth are identified as not being served by any other youth programming. SOAR activities include homework help and reading/math intervention; creative arts, STEM, structured recreation, social-emotional learning (SEL) through weekly peace circles, journaling, restorative practices, violence prevention education through age-appropriate safety/conflict resolution workshops, and family engagement.

Project RISE (Resilience, Integrity, Strength, Empowerment) is an intervention program for males in ninth through twelfth grade who have been identified as high-risk of engaging in gun violence. These young men are deeply affected by gun violence and are at an elevated risk for dropout, gang involvement, arrest, or retaliation. Project RISE activities include trauma healing through group sessions in Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools with licensed professionals, life & workforce skills such as resume preparation, mock interviews, job shadowing, and financial literacy, mentorship, evidence-based support via Credible Messenger model, peer-led conflict resolution circles, tutoring and credit recovery, structured sports, fitness, and creative outlets.

Nearly one year after this historic investment in community violence intervention (CVI) efforts in Sussex County, the town of Laurel has reported zero shootings or homicides since January 2025.<sup>27</sup> Although no single program can be credited with direct causation, the collective impact of these coordinated initiatives, catalyzed by the detailed initial investments, has clearly contributed to meaningful progress, resulting in lives saved and reductions in the financial burdens associated with gun violence.

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<sup>26</sup> World Population Review. (n.d.). Laurel, Delaware population 2025. Retrieved November 25, 2025, from <https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/delaware/laurel>

<sup>27</sup> DelawareBlack. (2025, November 24). Crime trends: Laurel, DE has reported zero shootings and homicides to date for 2025. DelawareBlack. <https://delawareblack.com/crime-trends-laurel-de-has-reported-zero-shootings-and-homicides-to-date-for-2025/>



*“The absence of shootings or homicides in Laurel this year shows what’s possible when the community comes together. Faith leaders, social service providers, law enforcement officials, and partners like Operation West Laurel are helping create the conditions for safety, while the Gun Violence Intervention (GVI) model ensures those most at risk receive support and accountability. These results are encouraging, but the rise in assaults reminds us we can’t be complacent – we must expand prevention programs, strengthen public awareness, and invest in solutions that stop violence before it starts.”<sup>22</sup>*

— Lauren Footman, Executive Director of End Community Violence Now

While intentional investments in evidence-based solutions in Wilmington and Laurel are driving historic reductions in community gun violence, increases in violence across communities in Kent and Sussex highlight the need for equitable investment across the entire state.



*“Gun violence doesn’t impact every neighborhood equally but every community deserves the chance to be safe. In Delaware, gun deaths cost the state an estimated \$1.3 billion each year, yet targeted Community Violence Intervention programs are already showing results in neighborhoods where they’re active. Investing in these programs means bringing life-saving support to communities that haven’t yet had access, empowering residents, and creating a foundation where healing, safety and opportunity can take root. Every new community reached is a step toward saving lives and building stronger, resilient Delaware neighborhoods.”*

— Jalyn Powell, Founder and Executive Director of Outloud DE

This investment across the state would help to build the infrastructure of gun violence reduction organizations, build capacity in all three counties, and professionalize the workforce so that CVI across the state is held to the same standards and quality in service.



*“Community Violence Intervention is one of the most effective tools we have to address gun violence because it meets people where they are—before conflict turns deadly and long after trauma occurs. As someone who has experienced the devastating impact of gun violence firsthand and now works directly with individuals and families affected by it, I have seen how intentional investment in CVI saves lives, restores hope, and strengthens communities. Continued and expanded funding is essential if Delaware is serious about reducing violence, supporting survivors, and creating safer futures for our neighborhoods.”*

— Tynietta Congo Wright, Executive Director of Jameil Aikeem Congo Cares

# Recommendations for Sustained and Expanded Success

Delaware has made meaningful progress in advancing community-based approaches to gun violence prevention. Yet the scale, complexity, and persistence of gun violence require a response that is equally comprehensive—one that pairs targeted funding with intentional coordination, stewardship, and shared accountability across systems.

## A Comprehensive Investment Strategy

To sustain and expand what is working, Delaware must adopt a multi-pronged investment approach that strengthens Community Violence Intervention (CVI) as public safety and public health infrastructure. At the center of this approach is a \$5 million recurring state investment, designed not as a standalone solution, but as a catalyst that aligns resources, stabilizes the field, and drives measurable impact statewide.

A \$5 million investment represents \$4.75 per resident in Delaware, a per capita cost less than that of states like Pennsylvania (\$5.88 per resident) and Massachusetts (\$5.71).

This \$5 million investment, ideally administered by the Criminal Justice Council in consultation with the Office of Gun Violence Prevention and Community Safety, would complement existing state funding for Group Violence Intervention (GVI). It would strengthen Delaware’s broader public safety and public health strategy by addressing the root causes of violence and supporting community-driven solutions. When implemented within a coordinated framework, this investment would:

- Strengthen community-based violence intervention and prevention organizations across Delaware
- Build and professionalize a CVI workforce, including credible messengers and community health workers
- Establish public, transparent, and shared data and evaluation infrastructure
- Improve coordination across systems and reduce duplication of effort
- Save lives while reducing the long-term economic burden of gun violence

As one community leader notes:



*“Investing in CVI programs isn’t just funding an initiative—it’s saving lives. These programs give our communities real pathways away from violence and toward hope, healing, and opportunity. When we invest in people, we prevent funerals, strengthen families, and change the future of entire neighborhoods.”*

— Kaligah Parker, Founder and Executive Director, The Carry Their Light Project

## What Sustained Investment Looks Like in Practice

Investment in CVI must be understood as more than direct funding alone. Lasting success requires strategic alignment of existing public resources, coordinated governance, and sustained cross-sector leadership, alongside new financial investment.

### Strategic Alignment of Existing State Resources

In addition to increased direct investments, Delaware can significantly strengthen CVI outcomes by intentionally aligning existing departmental resources with a shared violence prevention strategy, including:

- Department of Labor — leveraging youth workforce development, apprenticeships, and employment pathways as violence prevention and economic mobility strategies<sup>28</sup>
- Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) — advancing Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) through placemaking, lighting, greening, and environmental improvements that reduce opportunities for violence<sup>29</sup>
- Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funds — allowing the allocation of these funds for CVI programming and supports<sup>30</sup>
- Department of Education — integrating conflict resolution, restorative practices, and prevention education into school-based programming to intervene early and disrupt cycles of harm<sup>31</sup>

This approach positions violence prevention as cross-cutting public infrastructure, rather than the responsibility of any single agency or funding stream.

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28 Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab. (n.d.). *Summer jobs reduce violence among youth facing barriers to opportunity in the United States [Evaluation summary]*. J-PAL. Retrieved January 8, 2026, from <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/bb47bf83b7f64a519fae4abd01c29abc>

29 Garvin, E. C., Cannuscio, C. C., & Branas, C. C. (2012). *Greening vacant lots to reduce violent crime: A randomised controlled trial*. *Injury Prevention*, 19(3), 198–203. <https://doi.org/10.1136/injuryprev-2012-040439>

30 Pennsylvania Office of the Lieutenant Governor. (2024, December 13). *Shapiro-Davis administration delivers \$4 million in new federal funding to prevent gun violence and make Pennsylvania communities safer*. *Pennsylvania.gov*. Retrieved January 8, 2026, from <https://www.pa.gov/ltgovernor/newsroom/shapiro-davis-administration-delivers--4-million-in-new-federal->

31 National Education Association & Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund. (2024, June 18). *Gun violence prevention and response [Resource guide]*. NEA. Retrieved January 8, 2026, from <https://www.nea.org/resource-library/gun-violence-prevention-response-guide/gun-violence-prevention>

## Convening and Coordination as Investment

Beyond dollars, the State can invest by leveraging its convening authority to align county governments, municipalities, school districts, and community partners—creating the conditions for shared strategy, reduced fragmentation, and collective impact.

A proven example of this approach can be seen in Chicago through the Government Alliance for Safe Communities (formerly the Intergovernmental Partnership for Violence Prevention). Established in 2021 in response to rising gun violence and the influx of federal American Rescue Plan (ARPA) funds, the alliance united the State of Illinois, Cook County, and the City of Chicago around a shared community safety agenda. Through continuous coordination, aligned data practices, and joint capacity-building efforts, the partnership has successfully stewarded nearly \$350 million in public investment and is developing sustainability strategies beyond ARPA.<sup>32</sup>

A similar approach in Delaware would enable the state to:

- Use its convening power to foster alignment across agencies and jurisdictions and secure shared commitment
- Advance a whole-of-government approach, encouraging each department to support CVI in ways aligned with its mission and expertise
- Support shared accountability and learning, ensuring that all investments—financial and non-financial—are transparent, coordinated, and outcomes-driven

This framework reinforces that investment is not solely about new funding, but about intentional leadership, stewardship, and alignment that allow resources to work together in service of shared goals.

## Shared Commitments and Accountability

As community-based organizations working to prevent and interrupt gun violence, we recognize that investment must be matched with responsibility. The credibility and sustainability of Community Violence Intervention in Delaware depend on our collective willingness to uphold high standards.

Accordingly, the CVI ecosystem commits to:

- Transparency and accountability, including sound governance, responsible financial management, clear performance expectations, and timely reporting
- Ongoing learning and evaluation, through participation in data collection, reflection, and peer learning
- Operational excellence, by strengthening internal systems, staff development, compliance, and long-term sustainability
- Collaboration over competition, aligning across community organizations, government, philanthropy, healthcare, and other partners
- Community-centered leadership, ensuring strategies and investments are grounded in the lived experiences of those most impacted by gun violence

We do not ask for investment without accountability, and we do not pursue growth without responsibility. Our shared charge is to ensure that CVI in Delaware is credible, coordinated, and built to last.

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<sup>32</sup> Government Alliance for Safe Communities. (n.d.). About. Government Alliance for Safe Communities. <https://www.ilgovalliance.org/about>

# Conclusion

Gun violence continues to exact a devastating toll on Delaware’s families, communities, and economy. While important progress has been made, far too many lives are still lost each year. Beyond the human cost, violence imposes profound economic consequences—from lost productivity to increased healthcare and incarceration costs.

**To create lasting change,  
Delaware must take bold, coordinated action.**

A multi-pronged investment in Community Violence Intervention—pairing targeted funding with alignment, accountability, and shared responsibility—offers a clear and effective path toward safer communities, stronger families, and a healthier future for the state.

This advocacy effort is supported by a growing coalition of organizations and individuals who bring deep expertise, lived experience, and a shared commitment to advancing effective Community Violence Intervention strategies. Together, these signatories represent communities, service providers, researchers, advocates, and leaders united in calling for meaningful investment in CVI programs. The following list reflects the breadth and strength of this support and underscores the widespread consensus around the importance of sustaining and expanding these life-saving initiatives.

## Organizations:

- Brady
- Center for Structural Equity
- ChristianaCare
- Coalition for a Safer Delaware
- Community Justice Action Fund
- Cornerstone Community Center
- Everytown for Gun Safety
- First Step Community Reform
- Giffords and Giffords Center for Violence Intervention
- Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America
- Next Generation Outcome
- Nonviolent Seaford
- Our R.O.O.T.S. Foundation
- Project New Start Inc.
- Stanziale Solutions LLC
- Tank Mentality
- The Carry Their Light Project
- The Health Alliance for Violence Intervention
- Welfare Foundation, Inc.
- Westminster Peace & Justice Work Group
- Wilmington Alliance

## Individuals:

- Tynetta Brown
- Darryl Chambers
- Meryem Dede
- Sabria Fountain
- Lynne Kielhorn
- Beth Kopicki
- Ashley Johnson
- Shianne Lee
- Mickeya Linzie
- Denise Marks
- Anne McWalter
- Nikerray Middlebrook
- Harold Stafford
- Lidia Villarruel
- Hossein Zare



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