Review: Firearm Suppression Program: St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department
Reviewer: Pedro Vazquez
Date: 02/25/2013

Abstract: During 1993, St. Louis experienced its highest homicide rate. The majority of these homicides were found to be committed with a firearm and most of the offenders involved in committing these homicides were juveniles. Based on these findings the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department initiated the Firearm Suppression Program. The overall goal of the FSP is to reduce violent crimes by getting firearms out of the hands of juveniles. This report will explain and evaluate effectiveness of the FSP police strategy. The evaluation of this program involves two studies that have been conducted on the FSP program, a review of FSP programs/strategy on other crime prevention websites, the existence of any FSP programs in the city of Rochester NY as well as other communities, and the types of crime this program is intended to reduce. Furthermore, I will conclude the findings of the program and give some of my own recommendations.

1. Describe the Program or Strategy.

The Firearm Suppression Program (FSP) was developed by the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department in 1994. The objective was to reduce the levels of gun violence committed by juveniles in the community. The program developed a community-based, program-solving approach that involved community members input and assistance in dealing with gun violence among juveniles. The FSP had three components: 1) the tracing of serial numbers of confiscated firearms, 2) a review of the Sheriff’s records for firearms transactions to determine patterns straw purchases, and 3) the use of a consent searcher from to confiscate guns illegally possessed by juveniles. The FSP main strategy was to obtain firearms from the possession of juveniles. To achieve this goal the police department established a standard “Consent to Search and Size” form. The form allowed officers to get consent from parents to legally search the rooms of juveniles who have been arrested and/or suspected of having a firearm by parents and community members. The officers will inform the parents that their child will
not be charged with any additional charges if a firearm was to be found in the child room. The officers also provided referrals to counseling services for juveniles who were found to have possession of a firearm.

According to the researchers the St. Louis FSP program was divided into three phases, because of the changes through out the program. The table below show the years of each phase of consent-to-search program. The timeline can be found at https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/191332.pdf.

**St. Louis Consent-to-Search program timeline**

![Timeline](https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/191332.pdf)

### 2. What types of crime is it intended to prevent or reduce?

The FSP initiative was to locate and recover firearms from juvenile. The FSP intended to prevent or reduce crimes that were associated with the use of a firearm. Here are some of the types of crime FSP intended to reduce: homicide, robbery, and aggravated assault. The overall goal of the FSP was focus on decreasing the homicide rates in St. Louis communities.

### 3. Is the program or something similar reviewed on Blueprints for Violence Prevention (http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/) or Crime Solutions (www.crimesolutions.gov)? Provide Citations.
Yes, [http://www.crimesolutions.gov](http://www.crimesolutions.gov) has reviewed a similar program called Operation Ceasefire. This program was developed by the Boston Police Department’s Youth Violence Strike Force. This program is a problem-solving police and deterrence strategy that seeks to reduce gang violence, illegal gun possession, and gun violence in communities. The goals of the Operation Ceasefire program are to apprehend and prosecute offenders who carry firearms. This program targets high-risk youth as well as serious and violent juvenile offenders. According to the crime solution website, it is shown that the Operation Ceasefire program in Boston is a highly effective program. It has also been reported that the operation ceasefire program is no long active. Here is a list of other programs that have been reviewed by crime solution website and there also similar to the FSP St. Louis strategy:

**Kansas City Gun Experiment**: The programs consist of a police patrol project that was aimed at reducing gun violence. This Program is not active and has been found to have some effect in achieving its intended outcome.

**Targeted Gun Law Messaging**: The program focused on raising awareness about the laws and regulations and increasing public safety in Los Angeles. This Program is not active and has been found to have some effect in achieving its intended outcome.

**Indianapolis (Ind.) Directed Patrol**: this programs use aggressive traffic enforcement to seize guns in high-crime areas. The main goal of the program was to reduce the crime in Indianapolis. This Program is not active and has been found to have some effect in achieving its intended outcome.

**Project Safe Neighborhoods (Chicago)**: The program focuses on areas that have a high likelihood of gun violence. The program targets individuals that are most likely to
be involved in firearm violence. The overall goal of the program is to prevent gun violence. This Program is active and has been found to have some effect in achieving its intended outcome.

For a much broader explanation of these programs visit the crime solution website. This program or anything similar was not reviewed on Blueprints for Violence Prevention.

4. **Is there a clear theoretical foundation?**

Yes, there is a clear theoretical foundation to FSP. Officers are able to obtain firearms that are in the possession of juveniles by obtaining consent from the parents to search the juvenile’s room for firearms. This allows officers to get guns off the street and out of the hands of violent juveniles.

5. **Is there a direct, indirect or no clear theoretical link to crime reduction?**

I will have to declare that the FSP police strategy does not have a direct link to crime reduction among juveniles, but does have an indirect link to crime reduction. The focus of the FSP strategy is to remove any firearm from the hands of juveniles, thus lowering the numbers of crimes that could have been committed by the juvenile. However, the FSP police strategy does have a direct link in reducing the numbers of firearms in the community and in the possession of juveniles.

6. **Describe the logic model. Diagram it. How is it intended to reduce crime?**

St. Louis police officers will work with community members to get firearms of the street and out of the hands of juveniles. Police officers will response to the request of parents and community members who suspected that a juvenile has a firearm. Police officers than have the parents of the juvenile sign the consent to search and seize from.
This allows the officer to search the juvenile's room for any firearm. Both parents and juveniles will not be charged with a crime if the officer finds a firearm.

7. Does this program or strategy exist in this community? If yes, what agency is it run through? How long has it been in existence here? How is it funded?

No this program do not exist in the City of Rochester, but something similar to the program does. In the City of Rochester there is a program called Gun Drop-Off Event. The program's initiative is to reduce the availability of guns on the city streets. Individuals who turn guns in at the event are given a Wingman’s gift card. According to the City of Rochester website (http://www.cityofrochester.gov/gundropoff/), the program consists of collaboration with inmates from the Orleans Correctional Facility, Full Gospel Tabernacle, and the Rochester Police Foundation. This event has first run on 9/22/12 and as of right now does not show another data.

8. Does it exist in other communities? If yes, where?
Yes, similar strategy of this program does exist in other community, question 3 above points out these programs and their locations. Also most community employed the Gun Buyback Program, which is attended to get guns of the streets.


Yes, research has that the St. Louis consent-to-search (FSP) program was effective in confiscating guns from juveniles, in the first year. After the program stopped in 1995 and started back-up twice with a different format and set of objectives each time. The effectiveness of the program in confiscating gun from juveniles deceased and was no long effective. There is no researcher on the effects this program had on the homicide rates.


10. Provide a review of the research (At least two studies)
    a. What was the research design

Rick Ruddell and G. Larry Mays conducted a study on the firearms that were confiscated by officers from juveniles in the St. Louis FSP program from 1992-1999. The researchers used the National Institute of Justice body of armor threat-level scale to classify the firearms that were confiscated from juveniles in St. Louis. Additionally, the researchers added one additional classification for firearms in their study, which pretend to BB and pellets. The table below illustrates the NIJ threat-level scale that was used by
Scott H. Decker and Richard Rosenfeld conducted an evaluation of the St. Louis “Consent-to-Search” program. The researchers observed three distinct phases of program implementation. First was the early problem-solving phase, second was the crime suppression phase, and third was the community mobilization phase. The study consisted of two evaluation process. The first consisted of the Process Evaluation, which identify the attributes of individuals, program components, and community characteristics (Decker & Rosenfeld, 2001, p.10). The second consisted of a full Outcome Evaluation, which entailed three objectives: 1. Determine whether the program results in a net reduction in firearm possession by young people; 2. Determine whether the consensual of guns threatens the personal security of young people; and 3. Measure the program’s influence on the level of community safety (Decker & Rosenfeld, 2001, p. 10). The evaluation consisted of 24 ride-alongs which also included the observation of roll calls. There were twelve interviews with key FSP personnel, which included the former Chief, current Chief, and current and former Lieutenant, Sergeant, Circuit Attorney, and Legal Adviser to the St. Louis police department. There were also six interviews conducted.
with parents and children whose residence has been searched. The researchers also used the Mobile Reserve activity logs, which were coded to determine program activity.

b. Describe the data

The data in Rick Ruddell and G. Larry Mays study shows the trends in threat levels of firearms confiscated by St. Louis police officers. It shows that there has been 134 level 1 firearms confiscated, 504 levels 2, 204 level 3, 95 level 4, 4 level 5, and 114 level 6 were all confiscated thought 1992-1999. The data also show that 821 handguns were recovered by police, following that 139 rifles were also recovered, and 95 shotguns were recovered as well. When looking at the seized types of firearms it was shown that 13.4% of the weapons recovered by the police were illegal firearms.

Decker and Rosenfeld planed on conducting their evaluation of the FSP program in 1995, but were put on hold because the Chief of Police who had run the program stepped down. However, the researchers were able to evaluate phase 2 and 3 of the program. Consent-to-Search as Crime Suppression (Phase 2) in 1997 showed that the Mobile Reserve unit completed 27 consent searches. This number was less than 5% of consent searchers of the problem-solving phase 1. The consent searches yielded a total of 31 firearms. Also a total of 458 firearms were confiscated though out the year of 1997. This consists of vehicle stops (30%), search warrants (31%), and pedestrian checks (23%). Also not a sing consent search was conducted at the juvenile’s home. The consent was conducted of individuals between the ages of 18 and 34, which was not the formal targets of the program. In 1998 the third phase also known as consent-to-search community mobilization had emerged. It was found that this phase of the consent-to-search was heavily police driven. A total of 201 consent searches were conducted and 99
of the 201 cases 49% police did not obtain consent by parent of the juvenile. 42% of parents did grant consent to search and 6% of the case a warrant was served. It was found that 85 household were searched for firearms and a total of 29 firearms were recovered.

c. **Summarize the findings**

Ruddell and Mays study found that youth are more likely to have pellet gun, .22 caliber, and handguns confiscated by the St. Louis police. The researchers also found that there is no trend indicating that firearms were to become more lethal over time.

Decker and Rosenfeld study found that there was a lack of an institutional memory meaning there was bad record keeping. They also found that there was a lack of training for the program. There was no training manual, program description, and documentation of past achievements. It was also noted that there was a lack of commitment from leadership to the program. For phase 3 the researchers found that police sources are less likely to yield consent than are community members. Overall the researchers found that phase 1 of the program clearly used more community input into the front end and this led to higher rates of guns seizure. Phase 2 of the program was unequivocally suppression and crime-control. According to the researchers arrests, search warrants, and intelligence usurped the original goals of the program (2001, p.31). Phase 3 did also clearly use more community input, but did not match the achievements like phase 1. This was in part due to the reduction of consent from parents.

11. How would you rate this program or strategy?
   a. Generally recognized as effective
   b. **Good likelihood that it is effective**
   c. Inconclusive
d. Probably not effective  
e. Generally recognized as not effective  
f. Harmful or likely to be harmful

12. **Explain your Rating**

I rated the program as likely to be effective, because the program does show that it was effective in getting guns of the hands of juveniles. The programs did go through 3 phases, but if the program was run just like it was in phase 1. I believe that this program will still be active today.

13. One paragraph summary of the program, the findings and your recommendation.

The program developed a community-based, program-solving approach that involved community members input and assistance in dealing with gun violence among juveniles. The FSP had three components: 1) the tracing of serial numbers of confiscated firearms, 2) a review of the Sheriff’s records for firearms transactions to determine patterns straw purchases, and 3) the use of a consent searcher from to confiscate guns illegally possessed by juveniles. The objective was to reduce the levels of gun violence committed by juveniles in the community. It was found that the program was effective, but due to the changes overtime the program lost it effectiveness. I recommend that the program should be employed just like it was in its phases 1, were community members had most of the input. I also recommend that an enhanced record keep strategy also be employed.