



College of Liberal Arts

Center for Public Safety Initiatives

Nonfatal Shooting Initiative: Evaluation of Newburg and Utica Site

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Introduction

In many regions of the United States, non-fatal shootings are a major issue with considerable social, economic, and public safety implications. In order to better investigate and prosecute non-fatal shootings, the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) introduced the Nonfatal Shooting Initiative (NFSI) in 2015. The program's main goals are to increase clearance rates for non-fatal shootings, improve data collection and analytic standards, and enhance law enforcement agency collaboration. The Gun Involved Violence Elimination Initiative (GIVE) is a statewide program focused on gun violence reduction and was a driving factor in the creation of NFSI. The NFSI was piloted in two GIVE jurisdictions: Utica and Newburgh. This paper provides a summary of "Beyond Impunity: An Evaluation of New York State's Nonfatal Shooting Initiative" by Victoria M. Malkin, Julia Bird, and James D. Lewis (Cochran & Worden, 2022).

Program Summary

The objective of the NFSI is to enhance nonfatal shooting investigations and prosecution in order to increase the likelihood of successful prosecutions. The program seeks to increase law enforcement's understanding of the nature and dynamics of nonfatal shootings using a data-driven approach to identifying patterns and trends in nonfatal shootings. The program also involves efforts to improve community participation, increase training for law enforcement personnel, and improve collaboration between state and local law enforcement organizations.

The program primarily focuses on clearance rates. When crimes are "cleared" by arrests, law

enforcement organizations view them as having been solved. Clearance rates, or the proportion of arrests to known crimes, can therefore be used as a gauge for both police productivity and police-community cooperation. The objective was to increase the number of convictions and prosecutions supported by the evidence, whether or not victims and witnesses actively cooperated. The district attorneys in Newburgh and Utica pledged to support prosecutions based on evidence and participate actively and early in investigations. The police departments in these cities committed to completing in-depth investigations of all non-fatal shootings. Newburgh and Utica police departments had to create a written policy for non-fatal gunshot investigations, outlining the initial and subsequent investigative steps as well as the persons in charge of each one. DCJS facilitated timely forensic evidence processing, technical assistance, and training.

The first step of the NFSI Initiative involved providing funding for dedicated investigators in each department. Both Newburgh and Utica police departments committed to conducting rigorous investigations of all nonfatal shootings. The District Attorney's office in each city took a focus towards "evidence based" prosecutions. This project was backed up by crime analysts who were dedicated to supporting the investigation. Witnesses in nonfatal shooting investigations are a crucial source of proof and have a big impact on how much clearance rates improve. The Schenectady Police Department was included in the Initiative, although it received no additional funding for shooting prevention programs. This agency made a good choice for a comparison site due to it not being a part of the initiative and was known for their coherent research on violent crime.

Program Evaluation

The evaluation assessed the impact of the NFSI on the investigative outcomes of non-fatal shootings in Utica and Newburg. The NFSI's procedure and resulting evaluation is essentially an experiment. This aimed to compare the NFSI's procedures and results to the "status quo ante," or the more commonplace investigative procedure that came before the NFSI effort and which it was intended to enhance. The study of data gathered from a variety of sources, including law enforcement organizations, the New York State Department of Health, and the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services, formed the basis for the evaluation.

Evaluation Methodology

To obtain more in-depth and complex perspectives on the pre-and post-NFSI investigation procedures, the experimental evaluation started with semi-structured interviews with the committed NFSI investigators, the Assistant District Attorney, other investigators, and investigative supervisors in both sites. Investigators were questioned during interviews about their experiences in investigations, viewpoints on whether nonfatal shootings would be solvable, obstacles to clearance, and expectations for the NFSI program. Following protocol, the program evaluators extracted information about shooting occurrences and arrests from the record management systems of the police departments. The record management system (RMS) is a collection of law enforcement records and files that are safely stored, retained, retrieved, and archived. This tool was used by the police agencies as another source of data that obtained extracts of shooting incidents and arrests. The agencies also acquired more in-depth and detailed data on the nonfatal shooting incidents. These investigations were coded by the project crime analysts located in each of Newburgh and Utica police agencies.

Impact of the NFSI

According to the evaluation, the NFSI had a number of beneficial effects on the investigation and prosecution of non-fatal shootings in New York State. For instance, the initiative boosted information and resource sharing by fostering more cooperation amongst law enforcement organizations. Additionally, the initiative improved data collection and analysis, enabling law enforcement to spot patterns and trends in nonfatal shootings. As a result, law enforcement organizations were able to create more focused interventions to deal with the underlying causes of nonfatal shootings.

The evaluation revealed that the NFSI had a beneficial effect on civic involvement. The program featured a number of efforts aimed at increasing trust between the communities that law enforcement agencies serve and the public. For instance, the initiative gave community members the chance to engage in law enforcement training programs facilitated by the DCJS and incorporated them in the creation of intervention tactics.

This experiment demonstrated that clearance rates significantly increased soon after the effort was put into place, but rates fell as caseloads increased, first in Utica and then in Newburgh. However, there is still the question of whether the increases in clearance rates can be distinguished from regular fluctuations in clearance rates, which shift from year to year in every agency and may go up or down depending on changes in the shootings' features.

Challenges Association with NFSI

Despite the NFSI's numerous benefits, the evaluation also uncovered a number of its

drawbacks. The program's long-term sustainability requires increased funding. According to the evaluation report, the initiative needs substantial financial and human resources to be successful. The study also emphasized the necessity of continuing initiatives to foster trust between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve. Because community people play a significant role in supplying information about nonfatal shootings, trust is essential to the NFSI's effectiveness.

Implications for Policy and Practice

For policy and practice, the evaluation has a number of ramifications. The NFSI illustrates the significance of data-driven strategies for tackling complex societal challenges. Law enforcement authorities can create more effective interventions by using data to discover patterns and trends in shootings that do not result in fatalities. The importance of cooperation between law enforcement authorities and the communities they serve is also emphasized by the NFSI. Increased trust between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve can result from collaboration, which can also improve information sharing and targeting of interventions. The evaluation shows how resources must be continually invested in if the program is to be sustained over the long run. The NFSI needs substantial financial and personnel resources to function effectively

Conclusion

The NFSI is a promising initiative that aims to lower non-fatal shootings in the state of New York. The program comprises a number of practices and takes a data-driven approach to identify patterns and trends in non-fatal shootings. Newburgh and Utica police departments

used a multitude of methods to gain data for the project. These methods consist of rigorous investigations. The initiative took advantage of using the police record management systems to further expand information. This data was then compared to the Schenectady Police Department's data to conclude these findings. The project produced promising results for clearance rate improvement as well as a greater generation of information provided by witness interviews. This initiative provides an opportunity for further investigation into the elements that affect the course and results of nonfatal shooting investigations.

References

Cochran, H., & Worden, R. E. (2022). Beyond impunity: An evaluation of New York state's nonfatal shooting initiative. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 21(2), 235–271.
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The Center for Public Safety Initiatives is a unique collaboration between RIT's **Department of Criminal Justice**, the City of Rochester, and the criminal justice agencies of Greater Rochester including the Rochester Police Department and Monroe County Crime Lab. Its purpose is to contribute to criminal justice strategy through research, policy analysis and evaluation. Its educational goals include training graduate and undergraduate students in strategic planning and policy analysis.

The foundation of the Center is the practice of action research in which relevant data and analyses are brought to bear on the day to day decision-making processes of organizations. The Center serves the practice of policy development and implementation in real-time.

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