

The author(s) shown below used Federal funds provided by the U.S. Department of Justice and prepared the following final report:

Document Title: Preliminary Evaluation of SACSI in Winston-Salem: Summary of Findings

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Document No.: 202976

Date Received: 11/21/2003

Award Number: 2000-IJ-CX-0048

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**Preliminary Evaluation of SACSI in Winston-Salem:
Summary of Findings**

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September 4, 2001

Background

In the fall of 1998, the Department of Justice (DOJ) awarded two-year grants to Winston-Salem and four other communities under the Strategic Approaches to Community Safety Initiative (SACSI). The “heart” of SACSI was a collaborative strategic-planning model designed to help communities find and implement effective strategies to address their most pressing crime/violence issues.

The SACSI model placed the local U.S. Attorney in a strong leadership role, although many other community partners were also expected to participate in the problem-solving process (e.g., local, state and federal law-enforcement agencies; district attorney; elected officials; probation and parole services; judges; schools; social services; nonprofit programs; faith community, businesses). In addition, SACSI called for a local research partner to be actively engaged in the process. The researcher was responsible for collecting and sharing empirical data on the nature of the violence problem in the community. By bringing together the data and theoretical knowledge of researchers with the field experience of a variety of practitioners, SACSI was intended to foster informed, effective strategies. Because the planning and problem-solving took place within a coalition representing powerful institutions and diverse perspectives, there would presumably be a broad commitment to implement the resultant strategies.

Under the direction of Walter Holton, U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of North Carolina, a Strategic Planning Core Team was assembled to respond to the SACSI Request for Proposals. The Core Team proposed that the Winston-Salem version of SACSI would focus on the issue of *youth violence* -- defined in terms of the following offenses: homicide, rape, aggravated assault, kidnapping and weapons violations. This focus area emerged because of the extent of the youth-violence problem in Winston-Salem and the community’s pre-existing commitment to solving the problem. The violent arrest rate for juveniles was 2.85 per 1000 in Forsyth County, compared to 1.82 per 1000 for North Carolina and 1.34 per 1000 for the entire U.S. Well before SACSI was announced by DOJ, agencies from throughout Forsyth County had come together to develop comprehensive approaches to meet the needs of young persons at risk of committing violence (e.g., Forsyth Futures, Communities That Care).

Program Development

After receiving funds from DOJ, the Winston-Salem SACSI undertook a concerted research process to identify *strategic leverage points* that would allow the community to have a significant impact on the local youth-violence problem. A team of researchers from Wake Forest University designed a study that would:

- 1) determine the prevailing characteristics of violent incidents (e.g., locations, time of day, incident type);
- 2) determine the prevailing characteristics of offenders and their victims (e.g., family history, place of residence, relationship between victim and offender); and

- 3) define the specific population of individuals who should be “targeted” by the initiative.

The first important finding from the SACSI research process was that Winston-Salem’s youth-violence problem is confined to a relatively small proportion of the community’s young persons. In 1998, there were 68,298 persons under age 18 residing in Forsyth County, of whom 2,816 (4.0%) had been charged with some type of criminal offense. Of the 2,816 juveniles who had been arrested, only 243 had been charged for *violent* offenses (0.20% of the total juvenile population) and a much smaller number (36, or 0.05% of the population) were regarded as “serious violent offenders.” This analysis suggested to the Core Team that the most efficient method of preventing youth violence was to focus on the relatively small group of individuals who commit a disproportionate amount of the crime. These serious offenders are the persons who are most likely to commit violent crime in the future. In addition, these offenders tend to be embedded in larger social networks containing young persons who have not yet committed a violent offense; intervening with serious offenders thus helps to break up the pattern of peer influence that draws more youth into violence.

The research also showed that youth violence is concentrated not just among specific individuals, but also in specific neighborhoods of Winston-Salem. A disproportionate proportion of the violent incidents involving youth occurred in four neighborhoods: Southside, Cleveland Avenue, Kimberly Park/North Cherry, and Happy Hill Gardens. In order to gain the greatest “return on investment,” SACSI focused its violence-prevention activities in these four neighborhoods.

The research process produced a number of additional findings regarding the pattern of violent offending in Winston-Salem:

Older/Younger co-offenders. Juveniles are often brought into a life of violence by adults. One-fourth of juvenile crimes involved someone older than 18 as well.

Pathway crimes. Many of the juveniles arrested for violent crimes have a prior history of lesser offenses, specifically simple assault, drug trafficking, auto theft, sexual offenses, and communicating threats.

Mental health needs. The research team gathered anecdotal reports from law-enforcement agencies and social-service providers that many violent offenders (both first-time and repeat offenders) have psychological and/or emotional disabilities. The vast majority of these conditions go untreated.

Location. Juvenile violence occurs in a limited number of identifiable “hot spots,” including specific convenience stores, poorly lighted streets, abandoned houses and dead-end streets.

In addition to these findings on the nature of offending, the researchers also gained an expanded understanding of how adequately or inadequately the existing “system” prevents youth violence:

Limited consequences. Because of the inherent “laxness” of the juvenile-justice system, offenders did not hear a strong, consistent message that violent offending is a serious matter. In particular, juveniles convicted of violent offenses were often sentenced to either probation or training school.

Lack of social support. Many of the juveniles convicted of violence came from single-parent households and had few positive role models in their lives.

Education and job training. Many serious offenders have dropped out of school or been expelled. Without a diploma and job skills, they have little chance of gainful employment.

Lack of coordination of services. Although Forsyth County has many programs and services that could support positive development on the part of juveniles at risk for violent offending, these intervention and prevention programs tend to be widely scattered across different agencies that don’t coordinate their work.

Based on these findings, the SACSI Core Team developed a multi-pronged strategy for preventing youth violence in Forsyth County. This strategy explicitly focused on the most serious offenders who were deemed as being “responsible” for the violence in the four SACSI neighborhoods.

Representatives from the various SACSI partners were assembled to form a Community Enforcement Action Team that would deliver a strong “stop-the-violence” message to juvenile offenders, as well as to adult offenders who were known to be involving juveniles in their crimes. The message was delivered during **Notification** sessions, where the offenders were “called in” to the Winston-Salem Police Department. The “stop-the-violence” message was delivered not only by law-enforcement agencies and prosecutors (local, state and federal), but also by community representatives, including clergy from the SACSI neighborhoods. The Action Team presents a united front in proclaiming that “violence will not be tolerated within Winston-Salem.” At the same time, the Action Team tempers the enforcement message with an offering of supportive resources to those youth who indicate a willingness to change their behavior.

Operation Reach was created as a follow-up to Notification sessions. On specific pre-designated dates, teams of police officers, probation officers, clergy, and community advocates visit the homes of youth who have previously been notified. Team members reinforce the notification message and reiterate the offer of support and assistance. A packet provided to families on these visits includes information on available counseling/family support, substance abuse treatment, mentoring programs, after-school activities/tutoring, educational opportunities, and job skills training. In some cases, Operation Reach teams have also walked neighborhood streets and visited “hot spots” where there are high concentrations of juvenile violence, distributing flyers with the same messages to any youth they encounter.

Notification and Operation Reach were hypothesized to prevent youth violence according to the mechanisms shown in the SACSI Logic Model (Figure 1). This diagram includes a

number of distinct “tracks” for the different sub-populations that SACSI sought to influence.

The initial SACSI strategy also included the following proposed activities designed to help notified youth take advantage of critical supportive services:

Case staffings in which the young person, family members and agency workers would develop a coordinated plan to assist the young person in accessing need services. A “case services coordinator” would monitor the plans and ensure that the services were being delivered.

A **mentoring** program operated by the Winston-Salem Urban League.

A **job training** program that would link SACSI youth to existing and new job-training and workforce-development resources.

In addition to these primary approaches that emerged from the planning process, SACSI also maintained the “incident-review” process that played such a key role in identifying the individuals and hot spots that Notification and Operation Reach initially focused on. This review was institutionalized as the **Violent Incident Review Team (VIRT)**, wherein representatives from the Winston-Salem Police Department, the Forsyth County Sheriff’s Department, the U.S. Attorneys Office, the District Attorney and selected service-provider agencies meet every other week to review violent incidents and to plan a coordinated law-enforcement/legal response.

A number of other programs have become part of SACSI since the strategy was initially implemented. Some of these were developed as “official” SACSI activities as new funding was obtained: Streetworkers, JasonNet, Job Link, Cross-Agency Team. Other programs have become “affiliated” with SACSI as their staff members have joined the SACSI Working Group (e.g., the Truancy Team, Parenting A+, Weed and Seed).

Evaluation Design

In addition to using research to set strategic direction, SACSI also called for researchers to support the local partnerships through program evaluation activities. In particular, SACSI included a *formative-evaluation* provision (i.e., ongoing data-collection to assess whether the strategies were meeting their objectives, combined with group reflection on the meaning of the data). This evaluation process was intended to yield information and insights that would allow the coalition to refine, improve and adapt its strategies over time.

The current team of researchers from Winston-Salem State University and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro entered the Winston-Salem SACSI project in August 2000 with the express purpose of carrying out an initial evaluation of the initiative. The proposal to NIJ called for data collection to occur from August -- December 2000, although in actuality this process extended through April 2001.

The evaluation design focused specifically on three aspects of Winston-Salem’s initiative: Notification, Operation Reach and the “SACSI process.” Table 1 summarizes the evaluation design in terms of **evaluation levels**, **questions** and **methods**.

The evaluation of Notification and Operation Reach are covered in the section on **program-level** evaluation. This level of evaluation was designed to answer questions related to the operation of SACSI’s key program strategies. Namely, were Notification and Operation Reach effective in communicating the message that “violence will not be tolerated in Winston-Salem” and providing youthful offenders with opportunities and support for a more positive life course? This question was answered using four distinct methods:

1. observation of Notification and Operation Reach sessions;
2. structured interviews with SACSI representatives (e.g., police chief, Assistant U.S. Attorneys, probation officers, clergy) who carried out Notification and Operation Reach sessions;
3. structured interviews with offenders who “received” the Notification and Operation Reach messages; and
4. a focus group with parents of offenders.

In addition to these process-evaluation methods, the evaluation team also examined the criminal records of individuals who were notified to assess whether Notification prevented subsequent offending. Police data were also used to track changes in overall violent offending within the SACSI-designated neighborhoods.

In addition to carrying out these program-level evaluation methods, the evaluation also examined how SACSI operated at the **management level**. In particular, the research team relied on interviews with SACSI team members, direct observation of meetings and review of documents to understand what the SACSI problem-solving process looks like in practice. This aspect of the evaluation considered issues such as the choice of issues for focus, collaboration among key players, decision-making procedures, management of the initiative and organizational culture.

The evaluation was carried out under a “participatory research” philosophy. Throughout the evaluation, the research team maintained close connection with those persons who were directly involved in managing and carrying out the various programs under SACSI.

Evaluation Findings

This section of the report summarizes the key findings from the evaluation. These findings reflect the evaluation team's assessment of how SACSI was performing as of May 2001.

The SACSI Process

To a large extent, the "SACSI process" of community-based problem-solving was carried out in three distinct venues:

1. **Meetings of the Core Team.** The Core Team is a group of institutional leaders (e.g., U.S. Attorney, Superintendent of Schools, Police Chief, Director of Centerpoint, Director of the district office of the Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention) who established the strategic focus and programmatic direction for SACSI during the initial planning phase of the initiative. This group continued to meet approximately every 2-3 months to review progress, revisit the initial decisions, and explore new opportunities.
2. **Meetings of the Working Group and its various committees.** The Working Group consists of individuals who are "on the ground" carrying out the programs and activities of SACSI. These individuals represent the same agencies involved in the Core Team, plus a number of community-based organizations that have become invested in SACSI over the course of the first two years of operation (e.g., Parks and Recreation, Urban League, Visionswork). The Working Group meets on a bi-weekly basis to identify and work through operational issues that affect SACSI's effectiveness.
3. **Project Management.** A full-time project manager coordinates the day-to-day operations of SACSI (e.g., Notification, Operation Reach, VIRT, meetings of the Core Team and Working Group, grantwriting, relationship-building, public relations, political navigation). This position was initially supported by DOJ funds and housed in the U.S. Attorney's Office. With the expiration of the SACSI grant, this position was supported by the Kate B. Reynolds Foundation and housed at the new Center for Community Safety (part of Winston-Salem State University). At the same time, the original SACSI Project Manager, Sylvia Oberle, assumed responsibility for directing the Center. Rick Pender became the new SACSI Project Manager in the spring of 2001.

According to questionnaires filled out by members of the Core Team and Working Group, SACSI has succeeded in bringing together a diverse set of agency representatives and community members who have conducted a cohesive, focused process of problem solving around the issue of youth violence. Within both the Core Team and the Working Group, members have come to appreciate one another's perspective and to work together toward common goals. Group members had particularly positive attitudes concerning the degree to which members **respect** one another, even if they don't always identify with the perspective being presented. In addition, the vast majority of individuals in each group indicated that members **trust** one another either "a substantial amount" or "a great deal."

In terms of the specific problem-solving features that SACSI is designed to promote, the Core Team and Working Group agreed that the Winston-Salem initiative has succeeded in:

- Achieving consensus on important issues
- Developing a shared vision of success
- Having productive meetings
- Promoting extensive communication between agencies and sectors
- Being flexible in finding the best approach to accomplish the work

Interviews with the Core Team reinforced the questionnaire data. In particular, Core Team members indicated that:

The creation of new partnerships between law enforcement, social services and community groups was one of the most important accomplishments of SACSI. The data-based problem-solving approach that defines SACSI resulted in a deeper understanding of the nature of the youth-violence problem in Winston-Salem, as well as the establishment of a clear, well-grounded strategy for dealing with serious offenders.

One place where the Core Team and Working Group differed in their assessment of SACSI is their perception of whether the initiative was “able to adapt to changing events and conditions.” The Working Group had a much more positive assessment of this ability than did the Core Team.

Among both groups, there was a strong consensus that SACSI had **strong** leadership - particularly from the U.S. Attorney’s Office. The Working Group and Core Team also received high marks from members, and each group recognized the value of the other. In fact, Core Team members actually rated the Working Group as slightly more effective than their own group.

In looking across the various SACSI programs, Notification, Operation Reach, VIRT and Streetworkers were each rated as either “Very Effective” or “Somewhat Effective” by every member of the Core Team and Working Group. These individuals were less confident of the effectiveness of the service-delivery component, particularly as it related to resources that would benefit the families of offenders.

Notification Process

Strengths:

1. Notification sends a clear and focused message (i.e., “violence will not be tolerated by the community”) to those individuals who most need to change their behavior - juveniles who have committed violent offenses and adults who lead youth into violence. The message is even more focused and believable when it is accompanied by incident-specific information that pertains to the individuals who are being notified.

2. Representatives from a wide variety of law-enforcement and community-based organizations communicate the same message according to a coherent script.
3. The various individuals who have been involved in delivering the Notification message over the past two years have come to understand and respect one another's perspective. As the group has developed a common purpose (i.e., preventing youth violence), the various individuals have developed trusting relationships that cross a number of traditional divisions (e.g., African-American clergy versus police, federal versus local jurisdictions of law enforcement and prosecutors). Moreover, this cooperation between agencies and community representatives is apparent to the offenders who come to be notified.

Weaknesses:

1. Over half of the SACSI-identified juvenile offenders (Phase I) have not been notified. This inability to notify violent offenders results from a combination of factors: some of the offenders are not on probation (which means there is no "hook" for calling them in), some are in training school, some have absconded, and some did not believe they need to attend (because their Court Counselors or other key contacts did not reinforce the "invitation").
2. Notification promises swift and certain punishment if the offender violates the "no-more-violence" message, but these consequences were often not enforced by the Judge and/or District Attorney (in some cases, because legal statute militated against strict punishment).
3. Even if offenders believe the message that further violence will result in severe penalties, this may not be enough to change behavior, particularly among juveniles who act impulsively and have limited time horizons. The "no-violence" message, by itself, is even less likely to be a potent motivator of behavior change among the offenders who have diminished cognitive capacity or an emotional disability
4. Although Notification balances the "hard" enforcement message with a "supportive" message that offers resources to offenders who wish to turn their lives around, these resources by themselves are not sufficient to create a strong sense of hope and opportunity. Behavior change requires a great deal of motivation and perseverance on the part of the offender. This can be particularly difficult for young persons who have dropped out of school and have limited job skills.

Operation Reach Process

Strengths:

1. The monthly Operation Reach sessions are organized and carried out by dedicated, hard-working professionals and community members. The objectives for each OR visit are clearly articulated before the team goes into the field.
2. The persons who carry out Operation Reach work well together across agencies, sectors and orientations. The trusting relationships that Notification fostered have been reinforced by Operation Reach.

3. Operation Reach provides visibility to SACSI in the target neighborhoods, allowing local residents to see that the community is committed to reducing violence.

Weaknesses:

1. The demand for OR visits (i.e., the number of Notified youth who can benefit from follow-up) exceeds the capacity of the OR teams, particularly if one considers the need for subsequent follow-up.
2. It is difficult to coordinate the schedules of key individuals (especially Court Counselors) who could make the OR visits more beneficial. In particular, sometimes no one on the team will actually know the family who is being visited.
3. Operation Reach is designed to help the young person and family members understand what services and resources are available, but little coordinated effort is made to monitor whether those services are actually accessed.
4. Operation Reach actually consists of two quite distinct program models. Under the first model, the OR team provides follow-up support to individuals who have been notified (which requires team members who understand the family's situation), while the other model places the OR team at a "hot spot" or some other gathering place to send a *general* SACSI message about Winston-Salem's unwillingness to tolerate violence. These two sets of activities call for different methods and different individuals.

Re-Offending Among Notified Youth

An examination of the Winston-Salem Police Department's criminal-records data found that Notification and Operation Reach, by themselves, have not eliminated violent behavior. Of the individuals who attended one of the *standard* Notification sessions (i.e., not for auto theft or the large between-school fight) between September 1999 and April 2000, 20% had been either arrested for, or identified as a suspect in, a subsequent violent incident by January 31, 2001. The 20% figure pertained both to the under-18 (n=35) and over-18 (n=64) age groups.

While we know that Notification and Operation Reach did not prevent violence in an *absolute* sense, it is possible that the intervention may have reduced the incidence of violent offending. In other words, we don't know whether a 20% rate is any lower than what would have occurred in the absence of Notification. One piece of evidence suggesting that 20% is a "normal" rate for this group comes from an assessment of offending within a comparison group. In particular, of the 32 youth who had been identified as a Phase I offender but not Notified, 16% were known to have committed a violent offense during the same time period.

Neighborhood-Level Violence Rates

The bottom line for judging the effectiveness of SACSI (at least in the long run) is the reduction of violent crime in the targeted neighborhoods. Figure 2 shows, on a quarterly

basis, the number of juveniles involved in violent crime (either arrested or identified as suspects) for the SACSI neighborhoods and for the rest of Winston-Salem. The most apparent result from Figure 2 is the degree of quarter-to-quarter fluctuation that defines these two time series. Some weak seasonal patterns are evident (i.e., higher rates during the summer months), but one can also find contradictions to these patterns. Because of the “noisiness” of the two trend lines, it is difficult to detect meaningful differences between the SACSI neighborhoods and the rest of the city.

On the other hand, there is some indication that the SACSI neighborhoods have experienced a decline in juvenile violence relative to the rest of the city. If we look at the 18 months following the “unveiling of SACSI” (i.e., the first set of Notification sessions in September 1999), we find a total of 104 incidents where a juvenile was either arrested or identified as a suspect in a violent crime within a SACSI neighborhood. In contrast, for the 18 months prior to the introduction of SACSI (i.e., the six quarters to the left of the vertical line in Figure 2), there were 128 such instances. The reduction following the introduction of SACSI is 18.8%.

One might argue that different seasons are represented in the pre- and post- time periods, which makes them non-comparable. However, we can “control” for this seasonality effect by conducting the same comparison for the rest of Winston-Salem (the top curve). There, the relevant numbers are 351 incidents following the introduction of SACSI compared to 356 for the 18 months prior to SACSI (a 1.4% decline). In other words, the decline in youth violence was 17.4 percentage points greater in the SACSI neighborhoods.

The data seem even more suggestive of a SACSI effect if we restrict the analysis to robberies (Figure 3). Robbery has remained steady at about 2 robberies per quarter in SACSI neighborhoods since September 1999, compared to an average of 4 robberies per quarter prior to SACSI. In contrast, robbery has recently increased substantially for the rest of the city (after falling precipitously just before SACSI was introduced). If we perform the same pre-post comparison as above, we find that robbery has gone from 26 instances in the 18 months prior to SACSI to 11 in the 18 months post SACSI within the SACSI neighborhoods (57.7% decline). In the rest of the city, by contrast, the number of juveniles involved in robbery was 81 in the 18 months prior to SACSI and still 81 in the 18 months following SACSI.

Conclusion

The quantitative data paint a mixed picture of whether or not SACSI is beginning to have a discernible impact on patterns of violent offending in Winston-Salem. At least one fifth of the persons who have been notified subsequently committed at least one violent act. This does not connote *prevention* in an absolute sense, but it might correspond to a reduction in the rate of re-offending. Without a control group, we don't know what the rate would have been without Notification and Operation Reach.

On the other hand, the neighborhood-level statistics suggest that violence is somewhat lower in the targeted neighborhoods, particularly for robbery. Robbery is precisely the sort of "planned" violent crime that a deterrent message might have the potential to affect (as opposed to more impulsive assaults). It is possible that the SACSI message did get out to the right people (offenders brought into notification, plus other juveniles who might have otherwise committed violent acts) and that the message caused them to think twice. On the other hand, it is also possible that violence was displaced from the SACSI neighborhoods to other (less "targeted") areas of the city. Or we may simply be seeing normal fluctuations in neighborhood-level offending patterns. It is certainly too early to determine whether or not SACSI has had a "real" effect on the level of violent crime in Winston-Salem, and even more premature for understanding the nature of such an effect.

More to the point, we are still quite early in the strategy-development process. Many of the programs created under SACSI are still being strengthened. The evaluation found that Notification and Operation Reach each had definite strengths (particularly with regard to the active participation of multiple agencies and perspectives). However, each of these two programs also had room to grow (with regard to clarifying the purpose and underlying mechanism for the program, as well as in implementing the program in a way that delivers the most potent intervention and follow-up to offenders and their families). The individuals who manage and carry out these two programs have made significant strides in addressing the issues brought up by the evaluators (in keeping with the philosophy underlying *formative evaluation*).

One of the most important overarching findings with regard to Notification and Operation Reach is the recognition that these two programs are inherently only a beginning point to behavior change. Advising offenders that they will suffer dire consequences if they continue to commit violent acts, combined with information about "available resources" is but a first step to creating the motivation, skills and support system that are necessary to turn around the lives of these young persons. Knowledge and awareness, by themselves, will not produce sustained effects on criminal behavior. For a prevention strategy or intervention to be effective, it must pay attention to the context in which the young person is growing up, which often includes factors such as poverty, drugs and alcohol, mental illness, fragmented families, "deviant" peers, school that don't seem to care and a limited set of positive role models. A Notification session followed by one or two Operation Reach visits cannot hope to undo this context and create a true sense of opportunity. SACSI must also depend on more efficient and effective service delivery

from existing agencies, as well as new programs (e.g., mentoring, job training, special educational offerings) that can fill out the child's support system. Even then, whether or not the youth gives up crime and violence depends largely on the amount of initiative and perseverance that he or she is willing and able to bring to the task.

Assuming that a truly "comprehensive" system of enforcement and support is necessary to "drill down" to the many root issues that lead to violence, is this a role for SACSI? Referring back to the initial vision for the initiative - at both the federal and local levels - SACSI was designed to foster more inclusive, data-driven problem-solving around violence (*youth violence* in the case of Winston-Salem). The solutions that grew out of the planning process (e.g., Notification, Operation Reach, VIRT) are comprehensive in the sense that they bring together agencies and organizations that have never worked together in the past, and indeed often did not trust one another. SACSI has fostered increased inter-agency coordination at both the systems level (e.g., VIRT) and the client level (e.g., Cross-Agency Team). This groundwork is an important asset in building a comprehensive solution to the youth-violence problem. In fact, the Working Group is spending more and more of its meeting time mapping out the various services available to youth, as well as looking for new resources that would allow SACSI youth to find and access those services. However, the road to creating comprehensive systems of services is long, rocky and frustrating, especially as people come to recognize funding constraints and the inherent limitations of programs to transform children's lives.

As SACSI takes its next steps forward, it is important to remember what SACSI is and what it is not. SACSI is not a specific program (e.g., Notification), nor an agency that performs a service (e.g., case management), nor even a particular strategy for preventing violence (e.g., establishing clear and certain consequences for carrying a gun). Rather, SACSI is a *process* for finding effective solutions that various actors in the community can implement. Initially, SACSI was housed in the U.S. Attorney's Office and now it resides at the WSSU Center for Community Safety. But neither of these organizations "own" SACSI; they simply supported the process so that the community of Winston-Salem could take advantage of the tools and procedures that SACSI offers.

It is critically important that SACSI - as a process - be sustained in Winston-Salem. The youth-violence problem has not been "solved" in any absolute sense. Rather, the process of solving the problem has been initiated. Significant steps have been taken, from both a programmatic and collaborative standpoint, and these steps are beginning to pay off in developing effective strategies. Individuals from law enforcement, social services, schools, nonprofits, churches, etc. are now more committed to making a real difference in preventing youth violence. Just as importantly, these individuals now understand the nature of the violence issue from a deeper, more systems-level perspective - through social-science data, practice wisdom and experimentation with promising interventions. By sustaining this learning process and continuing to bring together a diversity of "experts" around a shared vision of a "healthy community," SACSI can honor its charter and have its greatest impact on violence reduction.