

REMARKS  
AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY

OF

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AT THE

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE  
RESEARCH FOR THE REAL WORLD SEMINAR  
“PREVENTING GUN VIOLENCE:  
UNDERSTANDING THE LAW ENFORCEMENT RESPONSE AND  
IMPROVING MULTIDISCIPLINARY PARTNERSHIPS FOR PEACE”

ON

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WASHINGTON, DC

Thank you, Howard [Spivak]. It is a pleasure to welcome so many colleagues and friends from the Office of Justice Programs and from across the Department of Justice – and of course our national and local partners. We are very glad to have you all with us.

A special thanks to our distinguished panelists for being here, and for all the contributions they have made to expanding our base of knowledge about what works to prevent and reduce gun violence.

And I want to thank Howard, Nancy [Rodriguez], and the National Institute of Justice staff for the terrific work they do to support the research we need to keep our communities safe from gun violence. Gun crimes continue to exact a heavy toll, and we still do not know enough about how to prevent them. There is a great need for resources directed at research in this area, and I am proud that our National Institute of Justice has stepped up over the years to answer the call.

Under the leadership of Assistant Attorney General Karol Mason, the Office of Justice Programs has supported NIJ's program of violence research, because one of the most important responsibilities of government is to keep citizens safe. Rigorous study and evaluation will help ensure that we are meeting that responsibility.

NIJ is moving us forward, helping to give law enforcement the tools they need to protect their communities from gun violence. A project with the Urban Institute is looking at gunshot detection technology and how it affects the response to firearms violence and related crime. This technology is commonly used in larger police departments – our Bureau of Justice Statistics tells us about 50 percent of large departments deploy it – but we do not know a great deal about its effectiveness. This project will help close the gaps in knowledge.

Another ongoing effort is a project with the University of California-Davis. Researchers are evaluating California's Armed and Prohibited Persons System which seeks to recover firearms from prohibited persons. These are people who may have purchased a gun legally in the past but who, as a result of a conviction for a serious crime or some other high-risk event, have since become ineligible to possess a firearm. The NIJ project is looking at whether this California system works and whether it reduces the risk of future firearm-related and violent criminal activity.

Beyond social science research, NIJ is leading the federal government's work to promote gun safety technology. NIJ conducted a review of these technologies and submitted a report to the President outlining a research and development strategy. One of the report's recommendations was for law enforcement to develop baseline specifications for gun safety technology on service firearms. Just a couple of weeks ago, NIJ convened a panel of law enforcement executives and other stakeholders to review a draft of baseline specifications for technology on law enforcement service pistols.

We believe this is a big step in the right direction. We know from our conversations with law enforcement leaders that they want to move this technology

forward. Illegal gun use remains one of their gravest concerns and one of the biggest public safety menaces in our country. As the President has pointed out, gun safety technology exists – it is time to put it to use.

Reducing gun violence is also about using smart strategies – community-based models grounded in evidence. We have seen through programs we support that we stand a much better chance of keeping communities safe when we use targeted approaches and enlist the involvement of all stakeholders.

Our Violence Reduction Network brings Department of Justice and local law enforcement agencies and Justice Department training and assistance resources together to tackle serious violence problems in cities challenged by violence. By taking an all-hands approach and sharing strategies and tactics across agencies, cities have been able to successfully address some of their most pressing problems. Detroit, for example, was able to reduce domestic violence homicides by 35 percent in one year.

And under our National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention, local leaders, federal officials, and community stakeholders in a number of cities have worked with each other to target and reduce serious youth crime. Boston, for example, used violence interrupters to mediate volatile street encounters and reported that it was able to reduce homicides by 25 percent between 2014 and 2015, the city’s largest decline in 16 years.

There is a common element to these and other successful programs – and that is their reliance on data and evidence. There is a reason these programs work, and it is more than a matter of luck. Reducing violence depends on a solid understanding of the problem that exists and of the approaches that are most likely to yield positive, sustainable results. That is why partnerships with researchers are so beneficial.

I’m grateful to our panelists for being here today to share with us their insights about what works, and I appreciate the NIJ team for opening up this conversation.

Thank you all for your interest, and for joining us today. I look forward to the discussion.

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