

***Operation CeaseFire--Camden
The Campaign to Stop the Next Shooting***

Program Summary*



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CAMDEN CITY OPERATION CEASEFIRE

I. Summary

A. Program Overview

Operation CeaseFire is a strategic, data-driven, problem-solving approach to reducing gun violence through a collaborative partnership between law enforcement and the community. CeaseFire New Jersey is modeled after the Operation CeaseFire initiative in Chicago. The principal goal is to achieve a substantial near-term impact on *youth* violence, especially gun violence. The key to success, ultimately, is to forge and nurture a true *partnership* between law enforcement and prosecutors and community-based organizations, community outreach workers, and neighborhood residents.

Operation CeaseFire is a priority initiative of the New Jersey Governor and the Office of the Attorney General. The New Jersey Legislature allocated approximately \$750,000 in the 2007 fiscal year budget to implement this public safety initiative throughout the state. Several geographical areas have been identified as potential Operation CeaseFire sites, with an immediate focus on the following five cities: Newark/Irvington, Camden, Trenton, Patterson, and Jersey City. Since the approval of the state budget, roughly 14 geographic areas have begun exploring the design and implementation of Operation CeaseFire.

B. Target Area

The activities of this initiative will focus on a specific geographic area in each site to bring about a reduction in crime by focusing on aggravated assaults with a gun. The identification of this target area should be based on:

- ✓ Crime data (highest concentration of shootings, homicides and aggravated assaults)
- ✓ Intelligence assessments by local and county law enforcement
- ✓ Presence of a strong non-profit/faith-based organization (or ability to effectively outreach in area)
- ✓ Potential for community leaders & residents to work collaboratively
- ✓ High-functioning District Collaborative Council Board

C. Core Components

The CeaseFire model consists of the following five *core components*:

1. **Enforcement & Prosecution**: focusing investigative and prosecutorial efforts, through a coalition of criminal justice agencies, to solve gun crimes and incapacitate and deter violent criminals in a defined geographic area.
2. **Community Outreach**: recruiting citizens from the community to deal directly with the high risk offenders in order to connect them with needed services, such as education and employment, seeking applications from local non-profit and faith-based agencies to lead this effort.
3. **Community Mobilization**: coordinating a collaborative effort between residents, schools, businesses and social services to inform offenders, high-risk individuals, and the community-at-large that violence and shootings are not acceptable.
4. **Public Education**: using multiple forms of communication to raise the awareness about Operation CeaseFire and to promote non-violence. This can be done through a variety of marketing means including flyers, billboards, t-shirts, 800 numbers, bumper stickers, lawn signs, and posters. The goal is to saturate the target area.
5. **Clergy Partnership**: recruiting local religious institutions to distribute public education materials that promote non-violence and urge congregants to help spread the message that violence will not be tolerated. Activities that clergy/faith organizations may want to engage in are safe havens and after-school programs, grief counseling for families of shooting victims, prayer vigils, and community marches.

II. Key Entities to Implement Operation CeaseFire

A. Neutral Convener

To assist in the successful implementation of this initiative, the state has selected a ‘neutral convener’ for each site. The role of the neutral convener, an agency or organization – typically an academic institution – is to bring all of the necessary stakeholders together and minimize any tensions and interagency ‘turf’. It is the neutral convener who *facilitates*, but does *not lead*, the implementation of the five core components.

The neutral convener’s role includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- ✓ Offer technical assistance & guidance to Operation CeaseFire partners
- ✓ Assist in the training of outreach workers
- ✓ Host & facilitate regularly scheduled Operation CeaseFire meetings
- ✓ Research & collate data
- ✓ Prepare reports
- ✓ Prepare & submit required programmatic & fiscal reports
- ✓ Serve as administrator & fiscal agent for Lead Agency

B. Core Group

The Core Group is the governing body of Operation CeaseFire in each site. The Core Group for this initiative in Camden will consist of the executive members of the Camden Safer Cities Initiative, as well as Camden City officials and key community and faith based leaders:

Office of the Attorney General
Mayor’s & COO Office Representatives
Supercession Executive Chief/Camden
Police
Camden County Prosecutor
NJ State Police
Camden County Superior Court
Camden County Probation

NJ State Parole Board & Parole District
Juvenile Justice Commission
County Justice Coordinator
District Council Collaborative Board
Representatives
Walter Rand Institute
Faith Based Representation
Social Service Agencies

Representation on the Core Group may change over time. For example, once this initiative is up and running in Camden, the Core Group may need to pull in:

- US Marshal’s Service
- Camden County Sherriff’s Office
- Camden City Board of Education
- Camden City School District

The Core Group should have a:

- Familiarity with the Target Area
- Willingness to work in partnership with law enforcement
- Willingness to work in partnership with the Camden community
- Willingness & ability to attend regularly scheduled Core Group Meetings
- Ability to work as a team
- Commitment to the successful implementation of Operation CeaseFire in Camden

Major Roles of Core Group

1. Assist in the selection of the Lead Agency
2. Assist in the selection of the Community Outreach Workers
3. Attend & actively participate in regularly scheduled Operation CeaseFire meetings to discuss aggravated assaults (shootings) in the target area and the appropriate community outreach and community mobilization activities

C. Lead Agency

The Lead Agency is the agency/organization that is responsible for implementing the **Community Outreach** core component of CeaseFire. This agency will also partner with other community organizations on the **Community Mobilization** and **Public Education** components of this initiative. Specifically, the Lead Agency is responsible for recruiting, interviewing, selecting, training, and managing the Outreach Workers. An appointed Project Coordinator with the Lead Agency will also participate in the regularly scheduled Operation CeaseFire meetings, where shootings and the appropriate community response are discussed.

The Lead Agency must either be a 501c (3) service provider, an arm of local government or a faith based-organization.

And must be able to demonstrate:

- ✓ Track record of providing services to the target population and their families (offenders and ex-offenders)
- ✓ Positive working relationships with local law enforcement
- ✓ Organizational capacity to manage Outreach Workers
- ✓ Fiscal capability in managing state grant funding
- ✓ Insurance that can cover the activities of the Outreach Workers
- ✓ Success in organizing residents, neighborhoods, the community-at-large
- ✓ Success in advocating on behalf of residents and their needs
- ✓ Knowledge of Target Area
- ✓ Ability to complete required written & financial reports

Organizations interested in applying to become the Lead Agency for Operation CeaseFire in Camden will be asked to:

1. Complete Lead Agency Application and submit with **required** supporting documentation
2. Participate in an interview process with members/representatives of the Core Group
3. Willingness for key organization leaders to undergo a Background Check by the New Jersey State Police

Identification & Selection of Lead Agency

In order to attract qualified agencies, the Core Group, with the assistance of the Neutral Convener, may conduct a series of community meetings about Operation CeaseFire. The purpose of these meetings is to inform residents, especially those living in the target area, about *Operation CeaseFire: The Campaign to Stop the Next Shooting*.

The Core Group will score each applicant based on a pre-determined score sheet. Once all scores are tallied and appropriate background checks are completed the Selection Committee votes on the Lead Agency.

Once the Lead Agency is chosen, the Neutral Convener prepares a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the Lead Agency to sign. This MOU should detail the scope of services, any special conditions and/or restrictions, time frames for submitting all required written reports including fiscal reports, and any other pertinent information.

The Lead Agency should post flyers, and/or an ad indicating that there is an opportunity for interested and qualified individuals to work as trained Community Outreach Workers.

Outreach Workers

One of the core elements in the Operation CeaseFire strategy is Community Outreach. Community Outreach is facilitated by trained community outreach workers who serve a multi-fold purpose:

- To serve as a catalyst for change by sending the message that residents & stakeholders will no longer tolerate violence in their community; that gun violence and shootings will not be tolerated
- To engage high risk victims of gun violence & their families in meaningful dialogue about stopping the next shooting and ending the violence/prevent retaliation

- To connect with the community to help de-escalate and defuse tense situations before they turn deadly
- To assist victims & their families in accessing various resources & social services
- To bridge the gap between the community-at-large and law enforcement
- To canvass streets, bars, parks, clinics, public housing complexes within the target area, during non-traditional hours, to disseminate CeaseFire literature and “*Stop the Next Shooting*” materials

Outreach Workers are the tangible links between law enforcement and community residents, helping to change both the behaviors and thinking of high risk individuals who may become involved in gun violence as perpetrators or as victims. Outreach workers are also the key to building the kind of trust and communication on a sustained basis that is an essential ingredient to any comprehensive program to reduce violence.

Community Outreach workers should be individuals who:

- Reflect the community in which they will be working
- Have a vested interest in the community
- Fully embrace the goals and objectives of Operation CeaseFire

Individuals interested in applying to become an Outreach Worker for Operation CeaseFire in Camden will be asked to:

- Complete Outreach Worker Application and submit with **required** supporting documentation
- Participate in an interview process with members/representatives of the Core Group
- Undergo a Background Check by the New Jersey State Police

Disqualifiers include:

- Active Probation
- Pending Domestic Violence Charges
- Megan’s Law Registrant on any Tier
- Current involvement with Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS)

If prospective Outreach Worker is on parole, the case must be reviewed to determine whether or not participation in this public safety initiative would be consistent with the conditions of parole. The nature of the prospective Outreach Worker’s offense(s) and how much time has elapsed since offense(s) committed should be taken into consideration.

Please Note: Prior offenses **do not** automatically disqualify a potential candidate. The Core Group and the Lead Agency prior to the recruitment of Outreach Workers must determine the type of prior offenses that are acceptable. This will vary statewide.

Individuals hired as Outreach Workers will be expected to:

- Complete of the mandatory 40 hour Training Program
- Complete required reports on Victim Contacts, Community Outreach Efforts, Community Mobilization, and Public Awareness activities
- Wear official Operation CeaseFire jacket, sweatshirt, or t-shirt when conducting CeaseFire activities
- Ensure identification badge is easily visible when conducting CeaseFire activities
- Notify the Lead Agency of CeaseFire activities (location, anticipated time of visit)

Community Outreach Workers are compensated on an hourly stipend for their work. The outreach worker stipend is based on the community outreach budget determined by the Office of the Attorney General. Outreach Worker stipends may be supplemented from additional funding sources provided to or by the Lead Agency.

Identification & Selection of Outreach Workers

The Core Group or a sub-committee of the Core Group will interview each candidate. Law Enforcement has veto power with respect to the final selection of Outreach Workers.

