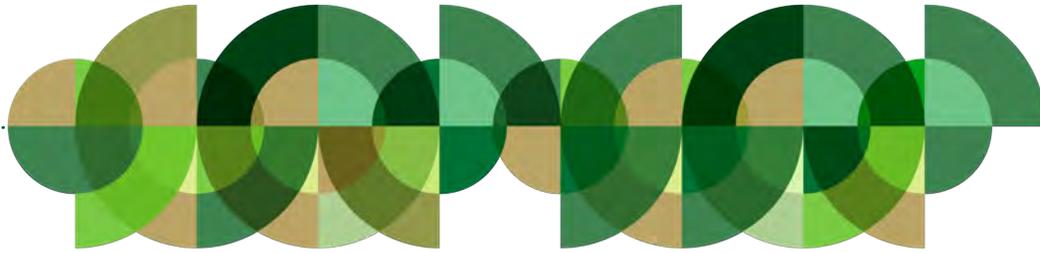


Alternatives to Violence Evaluation: Year One Report

March 2023



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**Prepared for
City of Charlotte**

The City of Charlotte provides services to more than 870,000 residents. The city's priorities are workforce and business development; transportation, planning and the environment; safe communities; and great neighborhoods.



**Prepared by
UNC Charlotte Urban Institute**

The UNC Charlotte Urban Institute is our region's applied research and community outreach center since 1969. We seek solutions to the complex social, economic and environmental challenges facing communities in our 14-county region. We engage expertise across a diverse set of disciplines and life experiences to curate data and conduct actionable research and policy analysis.





Acknowledgments

Research Team:

Angelique Gaines, MS &
Rachel Jackson-Gordon, PhD
(*Co-Investigators*)

Eric Moore, PhD

Bridget Anderson, MPH

Katie Zager, MA

Reviewers:

Kailas Venkitasubramanian, PhD

Khou Xiong, MPH

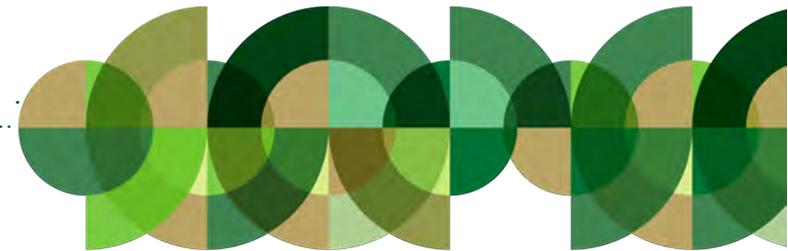
Sydney Idzikowski, MSW

Lori Thomas, PhD, MDiv, MSW

Special Thanks:

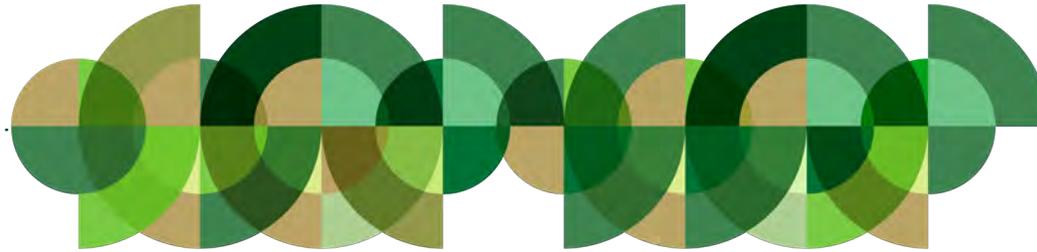
We thank the ATV and administrative staff who collaborated and participated in this evaluation.

Additional thanks to Nancy Pierce for local photos used in the report (pp. 5, 10).





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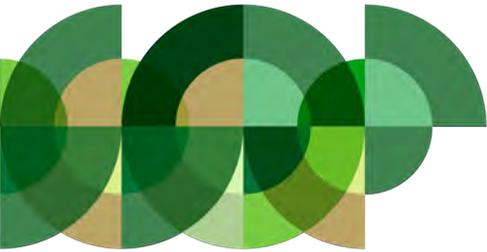
Executive Summary



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Executive Summary



Introduction

Firearm violence is a public health issue with detrimental consequences for victims and perpetrators, their families, and their communities. The rate of firearm-related assaults in Charlotte increased by 45% from 2019 to 2020.¹ In response to community violence, The City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County implemented the Alternatives to Violence (ATV) program in 2021 to prevent violence.

Alternatives to Violence uses the Cure Violence model—a research-based model aimed at preventing firearm violence.² Cure Violence has three core program components and two core implementing components; violence interruption, connecting with individuals at high risk of violence, community mobilization, data monitoring and reporting, and training, respectively.

The Beatties Ford community was a location that was selected by the City of Charlotte to receive this programming. The Beatties Ford community, a historically under-resourced community in Charlotte, alongside other communities in Charlotte have experienced heightened levels of violence. Communities of color and low-opportunity communities are often disproportionately impacted by firearm violence.³

The City of Charlotte partnered with the UNC Charlotte Urban Institute to conduct process and outcome evaluations to learn about the potential effectiveness of ATV in the Beatties Ford community, as well as implementation factors that may have influenced effectiveness.

The UNC Charlotte Urban Institute evaluation team used a mixed methods approach to conduct the process and outcome evaluations. The team conducted

interviews and a focus group with 12 individuals involved with program implementation, assessed administrative data from the Cure Violence Database, and analyzed public crime data as a part of the evaluation. Notes and monthly reports were also included to add context to findings.

Key Findings

Process Evaluation

The process evaluation showed that each of the core components were implemented, though to varying extents.

- 44 violence mediations/interruptions took place, and the staff spent over 1,500 hours canvassing the area. Interviews revealed that less time may be spent on violence interruption compared to other Cure Violence locations with higher volumes of violence.

1 Mecklenburg County Office of Violence Prevention. (2022). *The way forward: Mecklenburg County strategic plan FY2023-2028*. Mecklenburg County. <https://www.mecknc.gov/news/Documents/The%20Way%20Forward%20Slides-0902v3-%20Final.pdf>

2 Butts, J. A., Gouvis Roman, C., Bostwick, L., & Porter, J. R. (2015). Cure Violence: A public health model to reduce gun violence. *Annual Review of Public Health*, 36(1), 39-53. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-publhealth-031914-122509>

3 The Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence. (2021, February). Public health approach to gun violence prevention. <https://efsgv.org/learn/learn-more-about-gun-violence/public-health-approach-to-gun-violence-prevention/>; Frazer, E., Mitchell, R. A., Nesbitt, L. S., Williams, M., Mitchell, E. P., Richard, A. W., & Browne, D. (2018). The violence epidemic in the african american community: A call by the national medical association for comprehensive reform. *Journal of the National Medical Association*, 110(1), 4-15. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jnma.2017.08.009>



Executive Summary

- 23 participants identified as “medium risk” or in response to an incident were enrolled in the ATV program.
- 14 events were hosted or co-hosted with community partners. Many organizations and businesses were noted throughout evaluation data.

The facilitators of program implementation included staff attributes (e.g., credibility), staff training, and partner engagement. Barriers to program implementation included: gaining and maintaining trust with community members, program participants, and participants’ families; consistency with data entry into the CVG database and challenges with educating data audiences; and scope of need challenges, where the needs extended beyond what staff have capacity to accomplish.

Outcome Evaluation

The outcome evaluation found that individuals that interacted with the ATV program **have acquired**

knowledge and skills and have exhibited behaviors that protect them from violence.

The evaluation team also examined community outcomes to better understand how ATV’s interaction with these individuals might have impacted community violence outcomes. Specifically, the evaluation team observed five outcomes: aggravated assaults without a gun, aggravated assault with a gun, non-fatal gunshot injuries, homicides with a firearm, and violent crimes.

The evaluation team found NPAs in the Beatties Ford community witnessed **a significantly lower rate of homicides committed with a firearm** compared to NPAs in the comparison group (those representative areas that did not have ATV) during the period after implementation of the ATV program.

Although there were no statistically significant differences between NPAs in the Beatties Ford community and

those in the comparison group for the other crime outcomes, these outcomes are still important to pay attention to. When examining the average monthly crime rates, it appears that NPAs in the comparison group experienced higher rates of these other types of crimes compared to the Beatties Ford NPAs after implementation of the ATV program, whereas this relationship was reversed prior to implementation (Beatties Ford NPAs having higher crime rates compared to the comparison group NPAs).

Conclusion

The ATV program shows promising initial evaluation results. The report offers several recommendations for improving ATV and violence prevention in Beatties Ford. Beyond the scope of the program, it will be important for the broader community to continue to invest in traditionally disinvested communities like Beatties Ford to support sustained violence prevention.



Definitions & Acronyms



Definitions

Core components: Core components refer to the program activities that make a program effective. The core components of ATV are based on the Cure Violence Global (CVG) model which include (a) interrupting violence before it occurs, (b) identifying and changing behaviors of those at highest risk for being involved with violence and (c) changing community norms.

Outcome evaluation: An outcome evaluation is used to determine whether a program is effective at achieving program goals (e.g., violence prevention).

Process evaluation: A process evaluation is used to understand the implementation of the program and can help determine why a program was or was not effective at achieving program goals.

Fidelity of Implementation (Fol): Fidelity (part of the process evaluation) refers to whether the program was implemented as intended. For this project, fidelity means adherence to the Cure Violence prevention model.

Violence: We define violence here as the intentional use of physical force or power to threaten or harm others. This includes gun violence and non-gun violence.

Beatties Ford community: For this evaluation the Beatties Ford community is described as the three Neighborhood Profile Areas within the service area.

Participant: Participants refer to individuals enrolled in the Alternatives to Violence program in partial fulfillment of the core component of identifying and changing behaviors of individuals at risk of violence.

Community members: In the current report, community members refer to individuals who reside in or near the Beatties Ford area, and may be exposed to program activities.

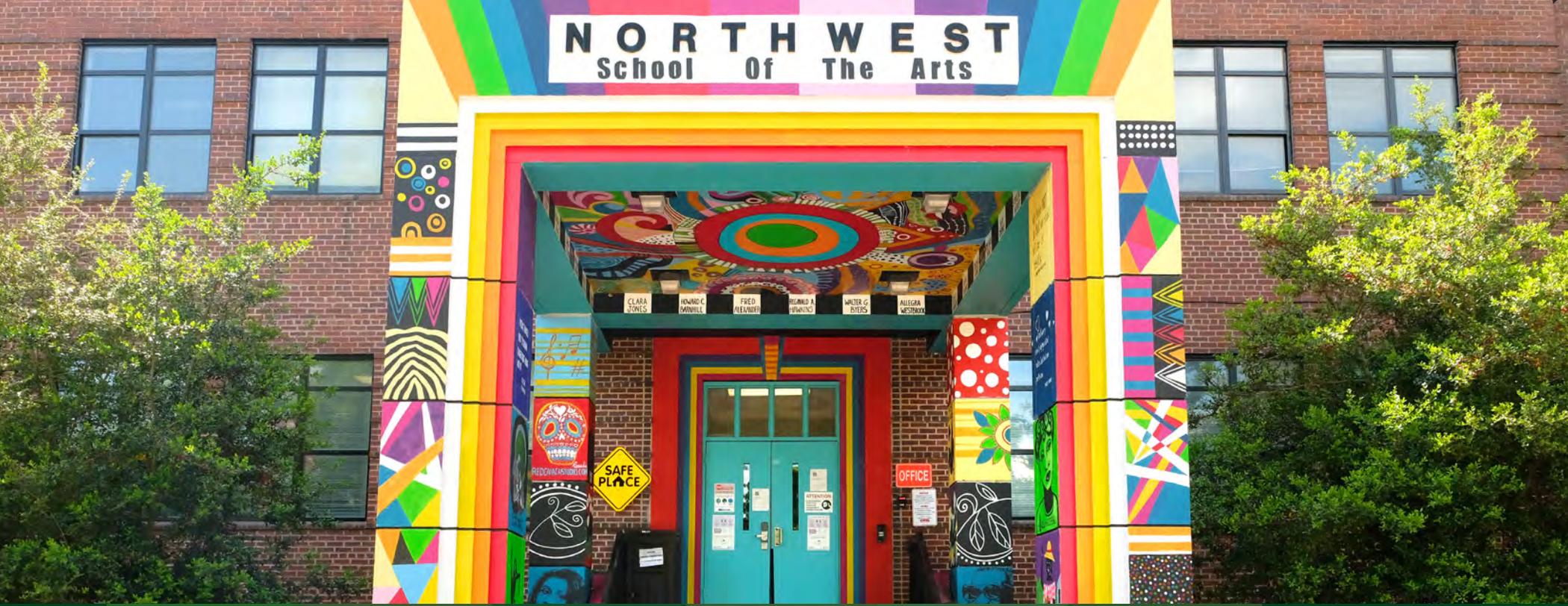
Acronyms

ATV: Alternatives to Violence (ATV) is a firearm violence prevention program being implemented in the Beatties Ford community.

CVG: Cure Violence Global (CVG) is a public health model for preventing firearm violence.

NPA: Neighborhood Profile Areas (NPAs) were used to compare outcomes for areas receiving the program or not. Beatties Ford includes three NPAs, for example.

YAP: Youth Advocate Programs (YAP) is the organization in charge of overseeing the implementation of ATV. ATV was housed in the YAP office in Beatties Ford during the first year of the program.



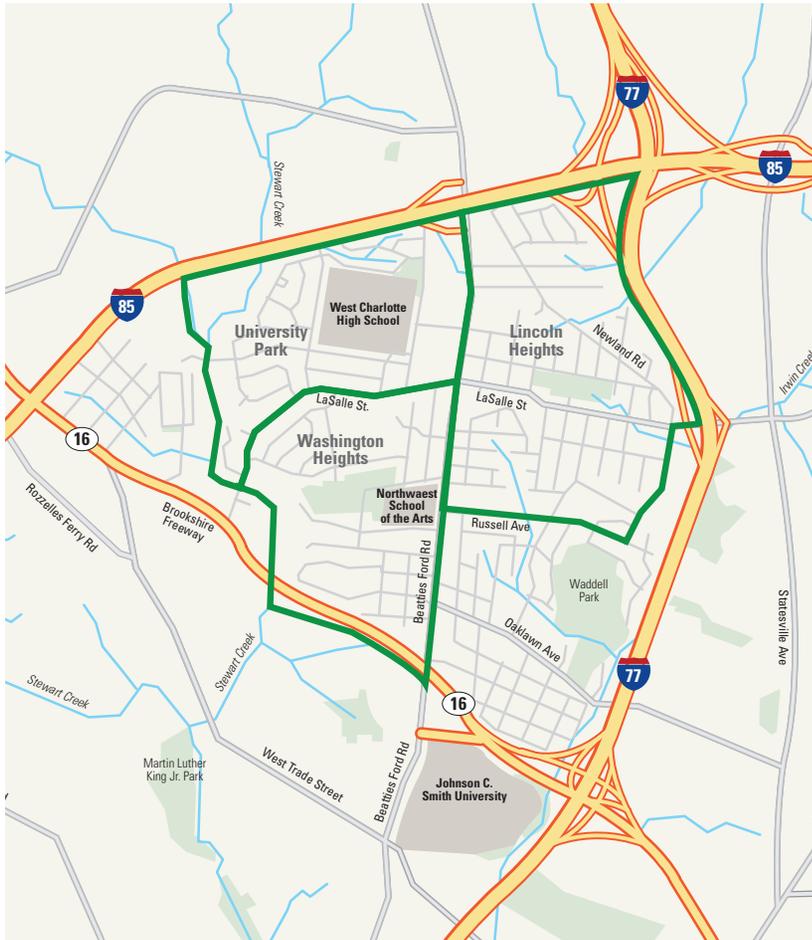
Introduction



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Introduction



Following years of decrease in firearm violence⁴, the United States saw a drastic increase in firearm violence coinciding with the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.⁵ Communities are increasingly responding to heightened community violence with plans and programs to decrease the prevalence of firearm-related violence. These violence and program trends are also taking place in Charlotte.

Intervention

The City of Charlotte implemented Alternatives to Violence (ATV), a violence interruption program, in 2021 as part of its broader plan to reduce violence in Charlotte.⁶ ATV adopted the Cure Violence model. Cure Violence Global (CVG) is a program model developed to prevent firearm violence. Although some evaluations of CVG modeled programs have found mixed results on effectiveness, CVG is one of the most promising models available for preventing firearm violence.⁷

This model is defined by three core components:

- (a) interrupting violence before it occurs,
- (b) identifying and changing behaviors of those at highest risk for being involved with violence and
- (c) changing community norms. CVG teams consist of violence interrupters, outreach workers, and site supervisors to carry out these components. ATV programming focuses on youth ages 14 to 25.

Intervention Area

Beatties Ford, a community that has historically been under-resourced, was selected as a location to receive ATV programming. In the Charlotte-Mecklenburg geographic area and beyond, people of color are more likely to be the majority within these under-resourced neighborhoods.⁸

4 Gramlich, J. (2020). What the data says (and doesn't say) about crime in the United States. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/11/20/facts-about-crime-in-the-u-s/>

5 Simon, T.R., Kegler, S.R., Zwald, M.L., Chen, M.S., Mercy, J.A., Jones, C.M., Mercado-Crespo, M.C., Blair, J.M., & Stone, D.M. (2022). Notes from the field: Increases in firearm homicide and suicide rates—United States, 2020-2021. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 71(40). <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm7140a4>

6 City of Charlotte. (2021). SAFE Charlotte: One year of progress 2021 executive summary. <https://charlottenc.gov/safecharlotte/Documents/2021-SAFE-Charlotte-Executive-Summary.pdf>

7 Butts, J. A., Gouvis Roman, C., Bostwick, L., & Porter, J. R. (2015). Cure Violence: A Public Health Model to Reduce Gun Violence. *Annual Review of Public Health*, 36(1), 39-53. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-publhealth-031914-122509>

8 Eberhardt, P., Wial, H., & Yee, D. (2020). The New Face of Under-Resourced Communities. https://icic.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/The-New-Face-of_Under-Resourced-Communities.pdf



Introduction



Charlotte has been assessed as having the lowest intergenerational mobility (i.e., the degree that a child’s socioeconomic opportunities depend on their parents’ statuses) in the United States of any of the 50 largest U.S. metropolitan areas.⁹ The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Opportunity Task Force identifies segregation by wealth, poverty, and race in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg geography as a significant barrier to opportunity.¹⁰ Historical policies, such as redlining and urban renewal, have formed and solidified this racial and economic divide in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.¹¹ “Under-resourced neighborhoods with high concentrations of poverty, lack of economic opportunity, and social mobility are more likely to experience high rates of violence.”¹²

In 2021, the year ATV was implemented, there were 183 violent crime incidents in the Beatties Ford community of which 37% of offenders and 30% of victims of these crimes were youth 24 years old or younger.¹³ Many factors that make youth more vulnerable to violence are linked to experiencing toxic stress, or stress that is prolonged and repeated.¹⁴ Toxic stress can negatively impact the brain development of children and youth and has been linked to increased risk of youth violence perpetration and victimization. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “Toxic stress can result from issues like living in impoverished neighborhoods, experiencing food insecurity, experiencing racism, limited access to support and medical services,

and living in homes with violence, mental health problems, substance abuse, and other instability.”¹⁵

Theoretical Framework Guiding Evaluation

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recognizes individual, relationship, community, and societal factors that protect people from experiencing or perpetrating violence.¹⁶ Each of these levels (individual, relationship, community and societal) are interconnected, and strategies are needed at various levels during the same time-period to sustain prevention efforts and effects over time and accomplish population-level impact.

Individual protective factors for youth include: High academic achievement

9 Chetty, R., Hendren, N., Kline, P., & Saez, E. (2014). Where is the land of opportunity? The geography of intergenerational mobility in the United States. Opportunity Insights. https://opportunityinsights.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/mobility_geo.pdf

10 Charlotte-Mecklenburg Opportunity Task Force. (2017). *The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Opportunity Task Force Report*. Leading on Opportunity. https://www.leadingonopportunity.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/LeadingOnOpportunity_Report-Compressed.pdf

11 Thomas, L., Idzikowski, S., Gaines, A., & Lane, J. (2019). *The racial wealth gap: Charlotte Mecklenburg November 2019*. UNC Charlotte Urban Institute. <https://ui.charlotte.edu/sites/ui.charlotte.edu/files/media/articles/RWTry2.pdf>

12 The Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence, 2021.

13 CMPD Violent Crime dataset, 2021. N=183.

14 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). Violence prevention: Risk and protective factors. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/riskprotectivefactors.html>; Center on the Developing Child. (n.d.) Toxic Stress. Harvard University. <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/toxic-stress/>

15 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020.

16 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020.



Introduction



(higher grades), high educational aspirations, highly developed social skills/competencies, and highly developed skills for realistic planning.¹⁷

Relationship protective factors for youth include: Connectedness to family or adults outside the family, ability to discuss problems with parents, frequent shared activities with parents, and parental/family use of constructive strategies for coping with problems¹⁸

Community/societal protective factors include: Safe places where people live, learn, work, and play; addressing neighborhood poverty, residential segregation, and instability; societal norms that protect against violence; financial security, education and employment opportunities¹⁹

Purpose

UNC Charlotte Urban Institute is conducting an evaluation of the ATV program to better understand the prevention strategies that have been implemented in the Beatties Ford community and the impact of the strategies implemented.

¹⁷ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020.

¹⁸ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020.

¹⁹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022.



Individual protective factors for youth:

- High academic achievement (higher grades)
- High educational aspirations
- Highly developed social skills/competencies
- Highly developed skills for realistic planning

Relationship protective factors for youth:

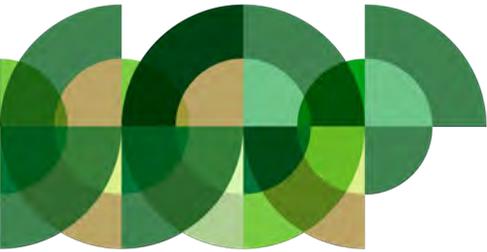
- Connectedness to family or adults outside the family
- Ability to discuss problems with parents
- Frequent shared activities with parents
- Parental/family use of constructive strategies for coping with problems

Community/societal protective factors:

- Safe places where people live, learn, work, and play
- Addressing neighborhood poverty, residential segregation, and instability
- Societal norms that protect against violence
- Financial security, education and employment opportunities



Evaluation Overview



The City of Charlotte partnered with the UNC Charlotte Urban Institute (Institute), an applied research center, to evaluate the ATV program. The purpose of this evaluation was to assess the potential effects of the program and to learn more about how the program is being implemented.

The evaluation team conducted a mixed methods process and outcome evaluation. The process evaluation aimed to better understand program activities, identify barriers and facilitators of program success, and determine whether the program was implemented as intended.

The questions guiding the process evaluation included:

1. What were the program participants' characteristics? Did the program reach the intended target group?
2. What methods and strategies were used to retain ATV participants? Were these methods and strategies successful?
3. To what extent was ATV implemented as intended?
4. Overall, what were the perceived facilitators and barriers to implementing the program's core components?
5. To what extent were partners engaged with the ATV program?

The outcome evaluation examined the program's potential effects on reducing and preventing violence in the service area. The questions guiding the outcome evaluation included:

1. What were the changes in awareness, knowledge, and skills among ATV participants as a result of their involvement in the ATV program?
2. How did program participants' behavior change since engaging with ATV?
3. Was there a decrease in gun-related and non-gun related violence in the Beatties Ford Corridor since the time the ATV program was implemented?

The evaluation of the ATV program was informed by a logic model (Appendix A) created by the evaluation and ATV administrative team. Logic models provide a framework to guide evaluation and future program decisions.



Methods

The evaluation team utilized a convergent mixed methods design²⁰, where quantitative (e.g., administrative data) and qualitative data (e.g., interview data) were collected during similar time frames.

The evaluation team also utilized a difference-in-difference (DiD) quasi-experimental design to determine if there was a decrease in gun-related and non-gun related violence in the Beatties Ford Corridor, the ATV service area, since the program was implemented.

Data Sources

Cure Violence Global Administrative Data

CVG provides programs that utilize the CVG model access to a CVG data monitoring tool. Data was logged by ATV staff and included daily logs, participant assessments, case notes, and more. The evaluation team used this administrative data to better understand who was served by ATV and how the program was implemented. Data related to outcomes were also reviewed for the study period (August 2021 to August 2022).

Staff and Administrative Interviews

The evaluation team conducted individual interviews with ATV staff (n=5) and one focus group interview with administrative staff (n=7)

to better understand how the program was implemented and the perceived outcomes of the program. The evaluation team interviewed a total of 12 stakeholders. Individual interviews were conducted in person, and the focus group interview was completed virtually through Zoom communication.

Staff Surveys

The evaluation team developed a staff survey that asked respondents to respond to a range of questions regarding program implementation and perceived outcomes. Survey results could not be reported due to a small sample size (n=3). However, survey data were reviewed alongside other sources of data to confirm or add context to the other evaluation findings.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department (CMPD) Crime Records

The evaluation team utilized the Crime Incidents dataset provided through CMPD to examine how violence changed in the ATV service area over time. Five outcomes that measure violence at the neighborhood level were examined: aggravated assault without a gun, aggravated assault with a gun, non-fatal gunshot injuries, homicide with a firearm and violent crime. Three neighborhood profile areas (NPAs) in the service area were

compared to representative NPAs (n=9) in the Charlotte area.

Data Analysis

CVG administrative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, recording the number of occurrences related to specific indicators of interest.

Individual interview and focus group data were analyzed thematically. The analysis of the findings focused on major themes present across data sources. As abovementioned, surveys were reviewed alongside other sources of data to confirm or add context to the other evaluation findings.

Crime incidence data was analyzed using a DiD regression model, which compared changes (or differences) in outcomes (aggravated assault with and without a gun, non-fatal gunshot injuries, homicide with a firearm and violent crime) over time between the Beatties Ford Neighborhood Profile Areas (NPA) and comparatively representative NPAs in the greater Charlotte area.

The evaluation team examined outcomes 24 months prior to the implementation of the ATV program (September 2019 to August 2021) and 12 months after implementation (September 2021 to August 2022).

²⁰ Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.



Methods



■ ATV NPAs
■ Comparison NPAs

Using a combination of the Quality of Life²¹ dataset (2022) and the Crime Incidents dataset provided through CMPD (2022), the evaluation team utilized eight variables to create a representative match to the three Beatties Ford NPAs. Each NPA within the Beatties Ford area was matched with three representative NPAs (total of 9 comparison NPAs) from the greater Charlotte area based on the following variables²²:

1. Violent Crime Rates (per 100 residents) for 2018 and 2017
2. Property Crime Rates (per 100 residents) for 2018 and 2017
3. Percentage of Black/African American residents according to 2020 population estimates.²³
4. Population Growth between 2010 and 2020
5. Household Income (divided by 1000) in 2020
6. Percent of residents with a Bachelor's Degree (2020)

Matched NPAs that were included in the comparison group were areas that were most appropriate to compare outcomes of interest (e.g., crime), because the evaluation team could be more certain that differences in outcomes were not due to the above-

mentioned factors. ***Additional details about the methodology can be found in the appendices.***

Limitations

As with all research, the study's methodological and analytical limitations warrant mention, particularly related to data availability, study sample and possible additional influences on outcomes. Data availability and sample size influenced what could be reported. The findings described in this report reflect data that was available and substantial for analyses.

Data availability

Many CVG data fields appeared to be incomplete for the study period. This does not mean that activities did not occur, but that we don't have data to confirm that the activities took place.

The evaluation used crime datasets made available by Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department, which were important for constructing the crime outcomes we were able to use. For all their benefits, however, there were some drawbacks to these datasets. For example, we were unable to filter out the use of a weapon (specifically a firearm) for all crime types, e.g., violent crimes. In addition, the crimes reported in the violent crimes dataset (CMPD 2022a) were aggregated to the most severe crime an individual is

charged with, instead of listing all crimes. This necessary aggregation does, however, possibly undercount some of the crimes that were committed within the greater Charlotte area.

Sample

A small staff sample size and limited data entry posed challenges for generating conclusive findings related to day-to-day operations.

Time Frame

The evaluation encompassed a three-year time period for the regression analysis: 24 months prior to the implementation of this program and 12 months after. While this was necessary in order to perform an evaluation for the first year of the program, scholars and other practitioners have noted that many of these types of programs take longer than a year to start demonstrating tangible and significant benefits on their outcomes of interest.

Possible Additional Influences on Outcomes

The evaluation team controlled for a number of variables but could not control for all variables that may impact crime rates such as transient nature of crime, changes in unemployment, an increase in police presence, other programs and groups that are operating simultaneously within either the service area or other areas within Charlotte, etc.

21 Charlotte/Mecklenburg Quality of Life Explorer. <https://mcmmap.org/qol/#74/>

22 Importantly, we excluded all NPAs within the immediate vicinity of Beatties Ford NPAs, i.e., those NPAs that were contiguous to the service area of ATV. This was done in order to limit the likelihood that we would capture spillover effects of crime possibly simply moving to the adjacent neighborhood.

23 This variable was used for matching to accommodate the unique racial composition of the NPAs in the service area.



Process Evaluation



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Overview



The process evaluation aimed to identify barriers and facilitators of implementation and determine the fidelity of implementation of CVG's core program components:²⁴

1. Detect and interrupt potentially violent conflicts.
2. Identify and change behaviors of people at highest risk.
3. Mobilize the community to change norms related to violence.

The model also included two implementing components:

1. Collect, monitor, and report program-related data.
2. CVG provides training and technical assistance.

This process evaluation addressed the three core program components and first implementing component.

ATV implementation

The ATV program was launched on August 14, 2021. From August through October, the ATV staff implemented each of the core components and began building relationships with community members and partnerships with local organizations, businesses, and schools. In November 2021, there was staff turnover. A new team was on-boarded the last week of December 2021. This time period required training and planning. Core components were re-implemented in February, 2022.

Conversations with staff and administrators suggested that ATV

started becoming a trusted community resource in Beatties Ford from the time the new team resumed activities in February 2022. Reported adjustments in practice, however, suggested that tweaks were still being made to optimize the program for the community.

Methods

As noted in the introductory methods section, multiple sources of data were used, analyzed, and triangulated to answer the process evaluation questions. These sources of data included ATV staff interviews and surveys, an administrative staff focus group, and the CVG data. CVG Administrative data included in this process evaluation spans August 2021 through August 2022.

²⁴ Cure Violence Global. (n.d.). What we do: The Cure Violence® Approach. <https://cvg.org/what-we-do/>; Cure Violence Global. (2019, December). The 5 required components of Cure Violence. <https://cureviolence.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/2019.12.12-Cure-Violence-Criteria.pdf>



ATV Program Participants

Upon meeting a new individual considered for participation in the ATV program, ATV staff would ask the individual or caregiver to complete an intake form that assessed risk factors for violence. ATV staff would later follow up with individuals and parents of individuals who met risk criteria or had a behavioral incident warranting program involvement. Criteria for enrollment based on risk was set by CVG and was defined as meeting at least five of the following: aged 14-25 years; potential street activity involvement; legal history with violence; personal injury by violence; close person injured by violence; potential member of group involved in street activity; and easy access to a weapon. For this study, we defined a participant as an individual who had at least one successful follow-up after completing the intake form.

Intake forms were completed for 48 individuals during the study period.

Of the 48 intakes, 23 had successful follow-up contacts and were considered participants for this evaluation. Only six of the 23 participants met five or more risk factor criteria for enrollment (n=3 risk factors per participant). All participants (n=23, 100%) were Black males aged 13-27, with an average age of 19 at the time of intake.

Program Participant Retention

Staff retained participants by “working with them” and staying in contact. Successful contacts with participants were mostly in person (n=24, 59%) or through phone calls (n=17, 41%). There were about four successful contacts logged per participant across time, whereas the program goal was to have six in-person contacts per month. Administrative staff indicated most participants of the current team were retained, but this is not clear from CVG data. It is worth noting that participants

Table 1: Program Participants

Characteristic	Enrolled Participants (n=23)
Age	Mean: 19 Range: 13-27
Sex: Male	n=23, 100%
Race: Black	n=23, 100%

(n=9, 39%) who were recruited from the first ATV staff team before the staff turnover in November 2021 did not continue with the program after their ATV staff contacts left the ATV team.

Many CVG case notes included details about addressing or discussing needs, such as job resources or behavioral challenges. This suggested that the provision of ongoing resources (emotional or tangible) helped keep participants in the ATV the program.



Fidelity of Implementation

The ATV staff provided detailed examples of each of the core components during interviews. Examples of each of the core components can be found in the CVG data as well.

Implementation of Core Components

This section outlines descriptions of core program components as implemented and reported by staff as well as fidelity to each component, as assessed across data sources. Most numerical reports came from the CVG database. It should be noted that there was inconsistent data-logging during the study period, making it challenging to draw conclusions about fidelity of implementation. Staff from Youth Advocate Program (YAP), the City, and County indicated that data quality had improved since the study period ended.

Finally, although ATV staff indicated they focused on the roles for which they were hired, they generally

worked together as a team. This implied that there was overlap in some of the activities implemented. For example, outreach workers and violence interrupters often paired to conduct program activities. The team found this strategy to be effective in the community.

Violence Interruption

Violence interrupters used information gathered from the community through canvassing to learn about and respond to possible incidences of violence, with the goal of preventing the incident or retaliation in response to the incident (mediation/interruption). This role required trusted relationships in the community. For example, one staff member described a time when a person was considering a violent response to a robbery, but decided to call the ATV staff member who then “talked him down and communicated with him after.” The staff member reported that this required the individual who was robbed to

Table 2: Violence Interruption Findings

Violence Interruption Activities	Context and Details
Community Canvassing	1,537 hours were logged for time spent canvassing the community across staff. It was noted that weather impacted time canvassing, but the team was in the community daily.
Administrative Tasks (e.g., daily meetings and plans)	Available staff and CVG data suggested that administrative tasks occurred daily.
Conducting Mediations	44 mediations were recorded. Only 8 follow-ups were recorded.

change how they resolved conflict to prevent future violence. Staff reported that getting the information to get ahead of an incident can be challenging; it helps when preexisting relationships facilitate a call beforehand. For example, one staff member said that schools can

be easier to work with when they call and ask for support with a conflict. Another staff member described the intel-gathering process as “putting [their] ears to the street.” Table 2 summarizes data by key activities for violence interruption.



Fidelity of Implementation

Identifying and Changing Behaviors of Those who are at High-Risk of Violence

The ATV staff identified potential participants through schools, events, and personal networks. Some participants were referred through individuals affiliated with the court system. Once potential participants were identified, the outreach worker engaged the individuals to assess the need to participate in the ATV program based on criteria developed by CVG. Once the need to participate in the program was determined, staff worked together and with the participant to identify additional needs, which included items such as securing bus passes, providing emotional support, positive activities (e.g., playing basketball together), and connection to community resources. Table 3 summarizes data by key activities for identification and changing behaviors of those at high risk.

Table 3: Identification and Behavior Change Findings

Identification & Behavior Change Activities	Context and Details
Working with Individuals who are at High Risk of Violence	Six of the 23 participants met the minimum risk criteria for program enrollment. Risk assessment data show few participants reached high levels of risk. The majority of risk assessment results fell into the “medium” categories for risk, need, and resilience.
Maintaining Participant Caseload	As noted in the participant section, the ATV teams documented 23 participants with follow-ups. Across months where new participant data was available between March and August 2022 (new team), there were 15 participants enrolled on average.
Meeting Needs of Participants	In addition to one-on-one and group activities, mentoring, and provision of resources, ATV staff made 8 referrals to additional resources (legal, work, and education). Twenty-seven referrals were made for non-participants, speaking to the high number of contacts with people in need of resources in the community.



Fidelity of Implementation

Community Norm Change

The third core component is related to changing community norms. This included activities such as hosting community events as well as partnering with local businesses and organizations to co-host events conveying anti-violence messages and responding to violent incidents in the community. The goal of these activities was to mobilize the community to promote anti-violence attitudes and further prevent violence. ATV staff described several of these community activities during interviews and data entry. For example, staff co-hosted an event with Team True Blue (a local charitable organization) called “Stop the Violence” and reached approximately 250 community members. As noted later in the section about partner engagement, strong partnerships were a key component as it related to community norm change. Table 4 summarizes data by key activities for community norm change.

Table 4: Community Norm Change Findings

Community Norm Change Activities	Context and Details
Partnering with Community Groups and Organizations	Data across sources noted community partnerships and contacts well beyond what was included in CVG data. The CVG data noted partnerships with 11 organizations/groups related to events.
Hosting Community Events	CVG data showed 14 hosted events (beyond the guidance of quarterly events), reaching over 1,300 individuals over 66 hours of event time. This included 955 adults, 258 teens, and 111 children under 12. It was unclear how often responses to shootings took place (e.g., community vigil event). Three events were for participants.
Educating the Community	Staff documented the distribution of public education materials to 1,059 community members.





Fidelity of Implementation

Data Collection, Monitoring, and Reporting

These data-related elements were part of the implementation components required of CVG programs. This element appeared to be a work in progress and was being addressed by administrative staff. One of the biggest challenges was comprehensive data logging, as noted in the barriers section of this report. Table 5 summarizes data by key activities related to data processes.

Table 5: Data Processes Findings

Data Processes Activities	Context and Details
Engaging Law Enforcement	CMPD provided data to the ATV staff. The extent that engagement with law enforcement needed to occur was unclear.
Logging Data Daily in CVG Database	Researcher review of CVG data and confirmation from YAP showed that data entry was inconsistent and lacking overall.
Using Data to Inform Program Implementation	Staff confirmed that crime data was used to support canvassing and program implementation decisions.



Fidelity of Implementation

Adaptations to the Model

Related to challenges, or barriers, there was ongoing discussion about program adaptations to fit the local context while maintaining fidelity to the CVG model. YAP worked to familiarize ATV staff with the CVG model, but ATV staff and administrative staff acknowledged that program implementation in Beatties Ford has looked differently from program implementation in other communities due to fewer incidences of violence. There was some data to support this broadly; for example, Memphis had a rate of 49.7 firearm homicides per 100,000 people in 2021, compared to Charlotte at 11.8.²⁵

One administrative staff member noted that the team was learning how to best use time when violence was not happening. Another administrative staff member highlighted this difference as an opportunity for more focus on primary prevention:

I think the model looks different on the corridor than it might look in other places. So that leaves more room for community engagement and ideally maybe some case management or in identifying those that are in more need where for individual supports where they might not have had that capacity if they were violent incidents every night and they were responding, doing that type of response.

ATV staff discussed that a lot of primary prevention work was taking place, such as connecting with youth identified as being at higher risk for violence or community outreach. One ATV staff member explained that the relatively low volume of violence in Beatties Ford allowed for more extensive connection with the community:

[...]On the Beatties Ford corridor, the violence is very sporadic[...]So that gives us more time to focus on community engagement and doing

things for the community members and being able to spend more time with our participants and develop more relationships with other resources. Whereas in other places, the violence is high volume, and they have no time to get involved with the community on that level.

Given the reported importance of trust from the community, especially as ATV becomes established in Beatties Ford, this shift in focus could help to improve program success in the long run.

Staff members noted that local decision-makers supported flexible program operations, as explained by one staff member:

They've let us mold and be ourselves, and let us work the program. Like I said, they're not micromanaging. They're not coming to stand over us and make sure it's done. That's a good thing because now we can really get in and work with the families the way we need to work with them. And if it's

working and that is that, then we're good. Then if it's not, then you come in and just[...] Instead of you trying to hold our hand through the process, let me go out there and crawl and walk before you come in and teach me how to run. You know what I mean?

Staff members also described how communication was key regarding activities that may fall outside the scope of core components, but that there was room for growth related to communication and management, between decision-makers and staff. More transparency with administrative components, such as the budget, could help the team grow the program and plan better.

The administrative staff members also discussed effort to find the right balance of not seeming “heavy handed” versus “too far removed.” Some of this tension emerged from the effort to ensure fidelity to the program model while also allowing for adaptation to local context.

²⁵ Everytown for Gun Safety, (n.d.). *City Dashboard: Gun homicide*. Everytown Research and Policy, Everytown for Gun Safety. <https://everytownresearch.org/report/city-data/v>



Implementation Barriers



The most salient barriers to implementation emerged from the data related to (a) community trust, (b) data entry and understanding, and (c) the scope of work versus the scope of the problem.

Community Trust

The biggest theme related to program implementation processes revolved around trust. ATV implementation required ongoing trust-building within and outside of the Beatties Ford Community. Familiarity and awareness in the community emerged as important drivers of building trust. Staff members noted the importance of being recognized in the community as resources as opposed to being affiliated with the police. Administrators noted that lack of visibility (e.g., on Beatties Ford Road), engagement (e.g., neighborhood meetings), and information about the program possibly contributed to lack of trust with the community, particularly in early phases of implementation. One administrator attributed the issues of trust to pre-implementation:

I think a lot of it really stems back from the inception of ATV and how it came about in there was some community discord from the very beginning and just fell in line with selecting YAP as the host organization. Again, some community discord related to that process and people not understanding what the process was or why that group was, why YAP was selected versus some other groups in the community.

From the staff perspective, trust was identified as crucial for each of the core program components:

- For outreach, staff members indicated parental trust required thoughtful steps (e.g., a meeting at a location of the parent/s' choice) before they could gain consent to work with their children.
- For violence interruption, staff reported that people at a crime scene may be suspicious that they were working with the police, or lack of familiarity with the program may prevent individuals from sharing information.

- This challenge extended to the broader community as well—there was the possibility of initial mistrust because of a history of being underserved: “And a lot of our people, or the people in the community, they don’t trust. They been taking advantage so much, unserved. So yeah, they don’t just trust us off the bat unless they know us, they’re familiar with us[...].”

With that said, staff and administrators noted progress in familiarity, awareness, and trust, especially related to being recognized as a positive resource in the community. One staff member described community trust as a “work in process,” emphasizing the importance of repetition of being seen in the community: “they’re becoming more and more familiar with us. They see us.” The increase in familiarity and trust in the community extended to community organizations and program partners, which is discussed in the later section, Partner Engagement.



Implementation Barriers



Data Entry and Learning Challenges

Another challenge related to the CVG model pertains to the use of the data monitoring system. Data posed a challenge at multiple levels.

The first challenge was data entry. At the time of the focus group, YAP had been focusing on improving the consistency of ATV staff entering data into the CVG data monitoring system to reflect their work. This topic was not discussed extensively during staff interviews, but one staff member noted that the data entry was “a lot,” especially when the focus was on working with people in need. During the study period, CVG data records did not match self-reported information by staff, and administrative

staff confirmed that data was not entered as frequently as the activities that took place.

The second challenge related to data was facilitating the understanding of CVG data among county and city audiences:

We've had to do a lot of education for I think the folks that we answer to about why data looks the way it does, and why it takes a little time to see those changes come along. So the educational piece with the [local stakeholders] I think has been huge for us to explain what they're seeing in a way that they can grasp the data better.

Focus group participants reported progress at both of these levels (data entry and data understanding).



Implementation Barriers

Scope of Work Versus Scope of Need Challenges

A final challenge that emerged across data sources was staff providing services beyond the scope of what ATV was contractually expected to provide despite limited capacity. Here, the scope refers to geographic boundaries (Beatties Ford) as well as the extent of individualized support to community members. This work beyond the scope of contracted services may have occurred because staff identified violence-related issues that extend beyond Beatties Ford and program participants. As noted in the introduction, violence is in part a product of years of underinvestment and involves multiple systems.

Administrative staff noted that the ATV staff felt responsible for incidents occurring outside of program bounds. And aside from incidents, staff often used their own resources to support program participants with basic needs (e.g., staff funding lunch for a participant).

If an individual needed a resource and contacted ATV staff, the staff likely spent time discussing as a team and referring that individual to the appropriate resource, regardless of their address.

Relatedly, once a participant was under the tutelage of a staff member, the staff member viewed the relationship as long-term: “So once you deal with these kids, they never leave you alone...Because you’re the only father figure some of them have.” To be clear, this is both a strength and a challenge. From one perspective, these relationships supported the positive changes discussed in the outcomes section of this report (e.g., going to college). From another perspective, staff members had limited capacity to take on new participants, leading to fewer participants overall. There were no new intake forms in the CVG database between April and August 2022. The effectiveness of this approach may

come down to whether the long-term participating individuals are those at the greatest risk of violence in the community (per CVG model core components). Staff may also consider a step-down approach, where participants are gradually disconnected from ATV when staff know the participants have been connected with crucial resources.

Staff operations outside of required ATV duties also helped build and maintain trust in the community. As discussed earlier in this section, trust is a necessity for implementing the program’s core components. In one of the interviews, the staff discussed a time when the team provided an individual with food. The evaluation team asked if they needed to get these types of activities approved, and the response was: “Some of the things, we just do it[...] They trusted us and allowed us to walk in and out of that neighborhood every day. So I think sometimes, it’s just from the heart.”



Implementation Facilitators

Staff Attributes

INDIVIDUAL



Relational skills



Credibility

TEAM



Cohesion



Collective networks

The most salient facilitators of program implementation that emerged included staff attributes and training.

Staff Attributes

When asked about the factors that helped facilitate program implementation, staff members often brought up individual, team, and organizational related attributes. These attributes were important to each core program component. Staff members' relational skills and credibility emerged as an important factor across interviews.

Staff members noted needing to be able to communicate with different types of people effectively. For example, one staff member said:

You've got to be a unicorn. You got to be able to be a chameleon, you got to be able to go anywhere and understand people [...] So you had to put on a different hat for every kid, you had to change your emotions for every kid you deal with because all of them don't respond the same way.

Relatedly, multiple staff members brought up the importance of listening.

Credibility and having history in the community also helped the staff to accomplish program goals, including improved familiarity and trust with the program: "with the team, people know them out here. So that kind of gives us a leg up." Staff were also better able to connect with high-risk individuals because staff were hired with justice-involved histories. Multiple staff members highlighted the value of being able to say they had once been in the same situation but ultimately redirected their lives.

The current team's cohesion and collective networks helped to meet the needs of the community and program participants. Multiple staff members valued teamwork, not only for the added value of expanded networks that could be used to allot resources but also for emotional support. This idea was embodied by the following quote:

I think that's one of the major things we do, for me is we build each other up, and sometimes you got your own personal stuff, then you're taking on other people's personal stuff. It could be a lot. So by you coming in and leaning on and talking to somebody

else who knows what's going on, it helps you and it helps keep you going. So I think that's one of the major things we do that I like.

Staff Training

Finally, staff discussed the organizational training they received as a facilitator of program success. Staff appreciated diverse and repeated trainings, ranging from modular training online to in-person classes about handling trauma. Multiple staff indicated that this new training combined with previous knowledge and individual attributes created an effective mix of preparation for program implementation.

In summary, ATV staff members' relational skills, credibility, teamwork, and training contributed positively to each of the core components.



Partner Engagement



Strong partnerships constituted one of the most salient components from interviews related to the community and may also be considered an implementation facilitator. Staff met with community partners as part of their administrative activities on 93 days, or on 15% of the days they spent working. The ATV program networked to build partnerships to support program implementation and violence prevention. As stated by a staff member, “you can’t build a house by yourself... somebody has to mix the mud. I mean, everybody needs everybody to a certain degree.” Local programs and organizations, including ATV, attended each other’s events and activities. This collaboration created synergy for positive change and acceptance of the ATV program. This idea was well-articulated by a staff member:

A lot of them [local organizations] familiar with us, and when we’re doing events, and stuff like that, they come out to support. And when the community see other people come in, supporting them, that’s always a help. And some of them come out and walk with us sometimes.

Of the 14 events or community activities logged in the CVG database during the study period, 10 were co-hosted with other organizations. Staff listed local organizations or businesses they had connected with, such as:

- Mothers of Murdered Offspring
- Atrium Health
- Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools
- A transgender parenting coalition

This list was not exhaustive. Staff indicated that YAP facilitated some of the relationships between the ATV staff and community partners.

Beyond community activities, partner engagement took place through referrals. However, the referral system seemed to be primarily one-sided. ATV referred individuals to partner organizations to obtain resources but rarely did organizations refer individuals to ATV. The relationship with local schools was the only example where a partner organization called on ATV staff to provide support.



Conclusion

The process evaluation reported here focused on the three core program components—violence interruption, identifying and changing behaviors of individuals at high risk, and community mobilization—as well as the first implementing component—data collection, monitoring, and reporting. Evaluation results showed that each component was implemented in the study period.

Notable strengths of program implementation included:

- Developing partnerships with local organizations and businesses
- Hosting community events
- Identifying individuals in the community in need of resources

and providing them information about or connecting them to available resources

- Selecting credible, resourceful staff committed to improving the community

Notable areas for future focus or assessment included:

- Entering comprehensive data consistently
- Ensuring program participants are those at highest risk of violence
- Continuation of activities to build community trust
- Finding the most appropriate balance between primary prevention (e.g., working with individuals

at high risk before any violence occurs) and secondary prevention (e.g., reacting to a violent incident) or tertiary prevention (e.g., rehabilitating a perpetrator) for the Beatties Ford community

The quality of available CVG data was a limitation of the process evaluation that posed challenges to assessing the fidelity of program implementation. Staff willingness to provide information about day-to-day operations provided helpful insights for assessing implementation processes.

Recommendations focused on improving program implementation can be found after the outcome evaluation findings.





Outcome Evaluation



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Overview



The outcome evaluation examined the program's potential effects on preventing and reducing violence in the service area. The outcome evaluation sought to better understand:

- If there were changes in awareness, knowledge, skills and behaviors among ATV participants as a result of their involvement in the ATV program
- If there was a decrease in gun-related and non-gun related violence in the Beatties Ford Corridor since the time the ATV program was implemented

Methods

The evaluation team used the CVG administrative data and staff interviews

to better understand individual-level changes including change in knowledge, skills, and behavior. The administrative data was analyzed descriptively and the interviews were analyzed thematically.

The Institute also utilized the Crime Incidents dataset provided through CMPD to examine how violence changed in the community over time. Five outcomes that measure violence at the neighborhood level were examined: aggravated assault without a gun, aggravated assault with a gun, non-fatal gunshot injuries, homicide with a firearm and violent crime. Three neighborhood profile areas (NPAs) in the service area were compared to representative NPAs (n=9) in the

Charlotte area.

Crime incidence data was analyzed using a DiD regression model, which compared changes (or differences) in outcomes (aggravated assault without a gun, aggravated assault with a gun, non-fatal gunshot injuries, homicide with a firearm and violent crime) over time between the Beatties Ford Neighborhood Profile Areas (NPA) and comparatively representative NPAs in the greater Charlotte area. The evaluation team examined outcomes 24 months prior to the implementation of the ATV program (September 2019 to August 2021) and 12 months after implementation (September 2021 to August 2022).



Individual-Level Changes



As mentioned previously, ATV prevention strategies included interrupting and mediating violence; connecting individuals to community resources; and building positive supportive relationships with individuals, often acting as mentors. These prevention strategies promoted knowledge, skills and behaviors that support violence prevention.²⁶

Knowledge Attainment

According to interviews with ATV staff, outreach workers were able to work one on one with participants. Within these trusted relationships, outreach workers were able to facilitate learning. ATV participants learned how to set goals and work towards them. Participants planned and took incremental steps to achieve goals they set with their outreach worker. Goal attainment also allowed participants to build their confidence. These goals included getting better grades, graduating from high school, and attending college. ATV staff described their interactions with participants:

²⁶ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020.

“I said, what’s your goal? I want to make a better grade in English, okay, well put that F you just made and let’s see can we make it a D. I’m not saying make D, let’s try to take baby steps to make that D, instead of missing a whole week of school, let’s try to come to school at least four days this week, okay? All right, so when you start we setting goals and we have a goal process we have with them and they start setting goals to feel proud of themselves.”

“Being an alternative to violence, being somebody that can give people a different route, try to find their talents, try to find what they’re good at, what their hopes and ambition, what they doing towards that to be able to be successful.”

ATV participants also learned how to respond constructively to difficult situations while working with their outreach worker. Staff shared that participants were able to reach out to their outreach worker when a problem arose, and OWs helped

participants carefully weigh the options and consider the consequences:

“Well, the fact that he called me to tell me about it, made it easy for me to talk to him. Told me what happened, and I just told him it wasn’t worth it, his life is worth more, and just having a conversation. I feel like he needed somebody to talk to at that time, and I was just there to talk to him about it. Just telling him, “it ain’t worth it. Let it go,” things of that nature. And let them talk. You more like just listen. And then you give your opinion or whatever.”

“Now you’re seeing a different type of way around things. Not necessarily avoiding things, but just the way around them in a way to, it ain’t that serious. I’m not about to mess up my school or with my plans because you got an issue with me. I mean, it’s kind of hard to explain, but it’s just so obvious.”

“Because it’s an alternative to violence. So, meaning that you think that no one’s there for you or the only choice is



Individual-Level Changes



to go rob somebody or to go do violent crime, we're there to give you a solution. Our team, out of all of us, we've been through so many things. So out of all the things that we've all been through together, somebody else can relate to that."

Additionally, staff mentioned participants were able to learn about various resources that were available in the Charlotte community. Connecting participants to resources (e.g., food, clothes, housing, mental health) so that they were able to meet their basic needs and gain greater stability was an important first step in the process that outreach workers implemented. According to the Cure Violence Global administrative data, ATV staff made 8 referrals to participants to various services including legal, work and education. Twenty-seven community members also received referrals.

"[...] if someone's lights are getting ready to get turned off, one of our clients or participants. We refer them to Crisis [Assistance Ministry], they need clothes, we have a way of getting

them clothes. If they need haircuts, we have a way of getting them a haircut, if they need tutoring, we figure out a way to get them tutoring [...] If you have someone might have mental health needs, we try to sit down with him, we refer them. So, we do a lot of referring, we do a lot of loving here."

"Yeah. I had a guy that I ran into at the wing shop and he was like, "Man, I ran into your team, and I was telling them how I got arrest history that keeps me from getting a good job and getting an apartment. They said they was going to help me with my expungement, but I haven't talked to nobody." I said, "Man, just give me your number." So I got his number, I went and did this little research, found out they're having an expungement clinic a couple of weeks later and I sent him the flyer and then texted him and said, "Hey man, show up to this. They'll be expecting you."

Skills Attainment

Violence interrupters modeled how to de-escalate and mediate conflicts,

and in doing so, provided community members with conflict resolution skills training (e.g., communication, problem-solving, etc.). An ATV staff member described that individuals demonstrated these skills during mediation, they were listening to and understanding the other side and communicating.

"In it, people don't see the other side of it. So if you're able to, which we have been able to do sometimes, is get people to see the other side of it or understand the other person's grief or gripe. Then it's like, okay, now we can open up a line of communication. And I think when you could open that line of communication, that helps a whole lot. Because sometimes when it's a conflict and nobody talks, the conflict just grows."

"So, we met with one family, got the information, "What's wrong, what's going on?" You know what I mean? "Why are you beefing with this particular young man and their family?" Got that information, took it back to the other family. Then



Individual-Level Changes



arranged the meeting. The meeting wasn't in person but it was on the phone. So for us, that's a win. And the family said now they have an understanding on both sides. We don't know how long it's going to last. But for that particular incident and for right now, it's been pretty good."

Behavior Changes

Staff reported that participants' behaviors also changed since their involvement with ATV. ATV participants had formed and maintained positive supportive relationships with staff. Staff consistently provided them with social and emotional support and modeled constructive behaviors. Staff described this relationship:

"They told him if he got his grades up before the end of the year, which he did, he's able to play in the last two

27 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020.

games. We attended his last game. We'll be attending his game next week, his last game of the season. So, it's immediate, just because, like I said, a lot of people just need support, especially young people. They need somebody that believes in them, one, and two, that's going to support them and be consistent with them. And just by doing those things, he's already starting to see where, "I could turn my life around. I don't have to go that path." So, I've seen it. I've seen it."

"First of all, for a lot of time, it's just support. A lot of people just feel hopeless. They don't have nobody to talk to. So, I think on the front side of things, that's what we provide. We provide just support, just have a listening ear. [.....] A guy, one of our participants, just really wanted some support of his football game, "You all come to my," like, you know what I mean, his parent. He's in

a single parent household. So, mom's at work. So, football game, just moral support I guess you would call it that."

"It's all it takes is the right person in your ear to give you a reason, to give you an excuse to walk away from this, to show you and lead them by example."

According to staff interviews, ATV participants were also more engaged in school (involved in school activities/sports), improved their grades, graduated from high school, obtained scholarships, and attended college. According to research literature, high academic achievement and educational aspirations are factors that protect youth from violence.²⁷

"Well the clients that I'm working with, I've seen a lot of changes. Like for instance, I had one kid that was failing in school, didn't care about school. He played football, was a positive and he



Individual-Level Changes



said the only thing he wanted to do was just make all conference. I said, "So you don't want to graduate?" He said, "Never thought about graduating, nobody never asked me that." I said, "Well let's think about graduating," he said, "Okay." so he got to work with the program, he graduated, he made all conference and he got a scholarship to go to school."

"He's got his grades together. Then, they allowed him to play on, he wasn't on the football team because of his grades, but they allowed, he got his stuff together these last couple of months."

"Yeah, so our outreach worker and violence interrupter have helped a couple of our participants change, turn their life around within months and graduate from high school and go to college."

Community members that engaged with the program had also applied non-violent approaches to conflict resolution as part of mediation. The ATV staff had 44 mediations from August 2021 to August 2022 (program year 1). Thirteen of those mediations did not escalate into a violent incident and 31 mediations escalated to some form of violence. The ATV staff may have deterred an incident from escalating even further.

The case notes provided the evaluation team with more information around mediations that took place in the Beatties Ford community. See below:

Case Note

[At the bus stop], 2 men were arguing. One man threatened the other man not to come near him. People at the bus stop said he had a gun. [Violence Interrupters] immediately got in between the two men and de-escalated the incident.

Community-Level Changes

Statistical significance:

Concludes a result is not a consequence of randomness. It allows us to claim the difference cannot be explained by chance.

Prediction:

The ability to estimate an outcome of interest using the mean (average) of your dependent (outcome) variable and specific values of your independent (explanatory) variable(s).

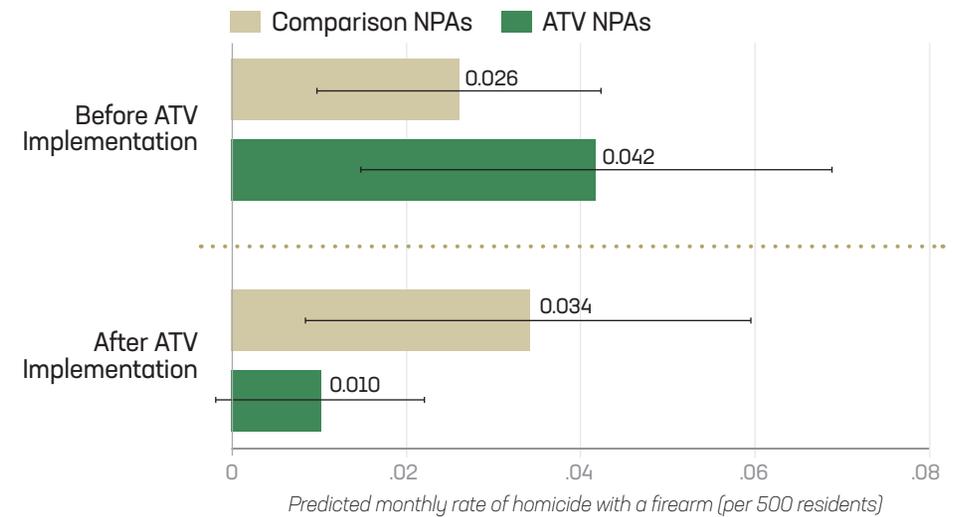
The evaluation team examined community violence outcomes to understand if there has been a change in violence since the implementation of the ATV program. Specifically, the evaluation team observed five outcomes: aggravated assaults without a gun, aggravated assault with a gun, non-fatal gunshot injuries, homicides with a firearm, and violent crimes.

Homicide with a firearm

Prior to the ATV program being implemented, the Beatties Ford (ATV) NPAs had higher rates of homicides committed with a firearm compared to NPAs in the comparison group.²⁸ NPAs in the service area were expected to have approximately .042 monthly homicides per 500 residents (Figure 1), an average of just over 5 homicides with a firearm per year while NPAs in the comparison areas were expected to witness .026 monthly homicides per 500 residents, an average of just over 3 homicides per year.

This relationship, however, reversed after the ATV program was implemented. NPAs in the Beatties

Figure 1: Predicted Rates of Homicide with a Firearm



Ford community witnessed a significantly lower rate of homicides committed with a firearm compared to NPAs in the comparison group during the post implementation period (September 2021 - August 2022). The predicted number of homicides with a firearm in the service (ATV) NPAs was approximately .010 monthly homicides per 500 residents, an average of just over 1 for the year after the

implementation of ATV. Conversely, the NPAs within the comparison group were expected to see .034 monthly homicides per 500 residents, an average of just over 4 homicides with a firearm for the year. Put another way, the number of homicides with a firearm (per 5000 residents) dropped by almost 4 in the ATV NPAs but went up by almost 2 in the non-ATV NPAs after the program was implemented.

²⁸ A map that depicts the density of homicides with a firearm in the service and comparison group NPAs can be found in Appendix C. Predicted monthly rates stem from the DiD regression model utilizing bootstrapped standard errors on monthly homicides with a firearm rate. The output for this model can be found in Appendix B.6.



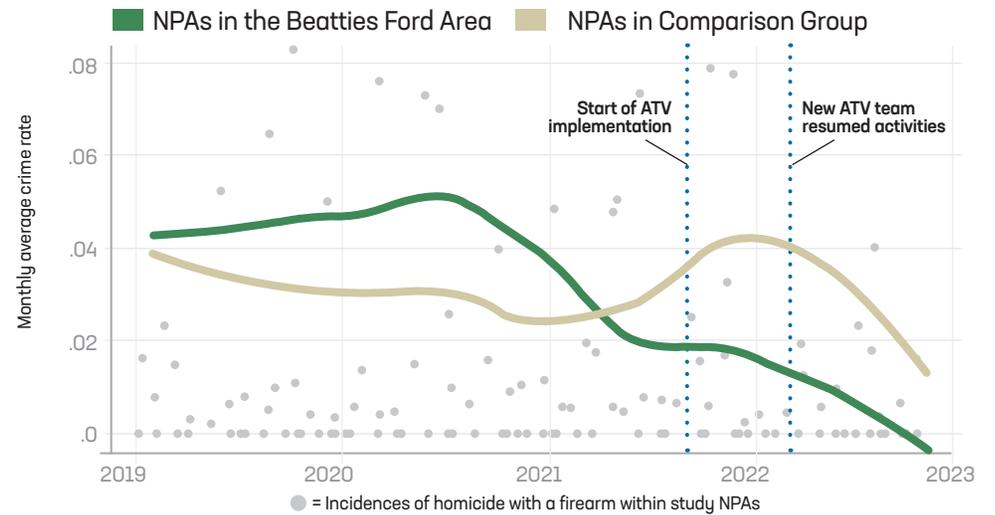
Community-Level Changes

Mean crime rate

While it is important to understand the statistical relationship between the implementation of ATV, time, and the rate of homicides with a firearm, it is also instructive to look at the average monthly trend of this crime for all the NPAs in our analysis (12 total). Figure 2 plots the monthly average of homicides with a firearm per 500 residents across the duration of our time period. Importantly, we differentiated NPAs, with the solid green line signifying an NPA within the service area while the solid gold line illustrates an NPA within the comparison areas. The two vertical dashed lines illustrate the beginning of ATVs implementation (September 2021) and the time when ATV had a new team resume program activities (February 2022).²⁹

NPAs within the Beatties Ford area routinely had a higher rate of homicides with a firearm when compared with representative NPAs from the

Figure 2: Monthly Average for Homicide with a Firearm Rate

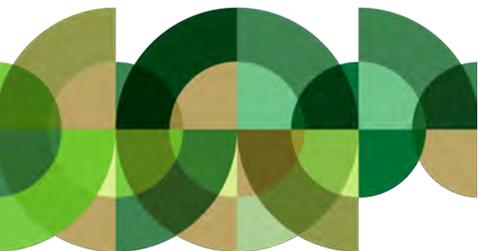


beginning of the study period until just after the start of 2021.³⁰ Interestingly, this rate began to plateau for much of the year until a few months after the implementation of ATV when the crime rate began to drop again. NPAs within the comparison group, conversely, saw

an extraordinary increase in the monthly rate of homicides with a firearm as they nearly doubled from 2021 to 2022. The rate for this crime also began to decrease after the start of the year in these areas, though they remain higher than NPAs in the ATV service area.

²⁹ In November 2021, there was staff turnover. A new team was on-boarded the last week of December 2021. This time period required training and planning. Core components were re-implemented in February, 2022.

³⁰ It is important to note that these figures do not speak to statistically significant differences between the average monthly crimes between ATV service NPAs and comparison NPAs. The figures merely illustrate how the average has potentially changed (or not) over the duration of the time period.





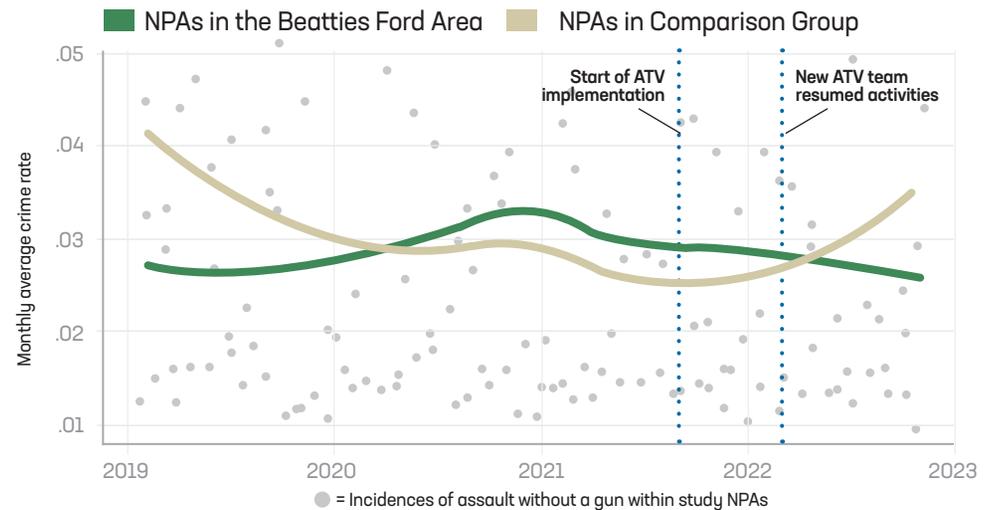
Community-Level Changes

Other Crime Outcomes

No statistically significant differences were found between the Beatties Ford and comparison NPAs for aggravated assaults without a gun, aggravated assaults with a gun, non-fatal gunshot injuries, or violent crime rates after the implementation of the ATV program. While differences remained between NPAs in the service areas and comparison neighborhoods, this finding implies that there is no significant change in the rates of these four crimes after the implementation of the ATV program compared to the 24 months prior to its implementation.

This finding, however, does not mean that the above mentioned outcomes should be ignored. It is still beneficial to examine average monthly rates of these crime outcomes similar to what was done in Figure 2. This can provide a more general perspective on how these crime rates have evolved over the duration of the study period, though it does not show any relationship

Figure 3: Monthly Average for Aggravated Assault without a Gun Rate



between the implementation of the ATV program and the corresponding changes within these crime rates.

Aggravated assault without gun

Prior to the implementation of ATV, before the first vertical dotted line, the average monthly rate of

aggravated assaults without a gun was higher in the Beatties Ford NPAs, however by the time the new ATV team resumed program activities trends had been reversed with NPAs in the Beatties Ford area having lower rates of aggravated assault without a gun.



Community-Level Changes

Aggravated assault with gun

Prior to the implementation of ATV, the average monthly rate of aggravated assaults with a gun was higher in comparison NPAs; the difference began to shrink around the start of 2021. By the time ATV was initially implemented, the trends had been reversed, with NPAs in the Beatties Ford area having higher rates of aggravated assault. This trend, however, began to reverse again after the second vertical line (new team resumed program activities), and by the end of the year comparison NPAs once again had higher rates of aggravated assaults compared to NPAs in the ATV service area.

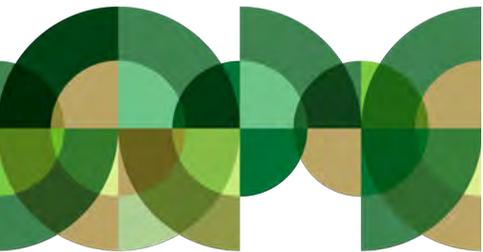
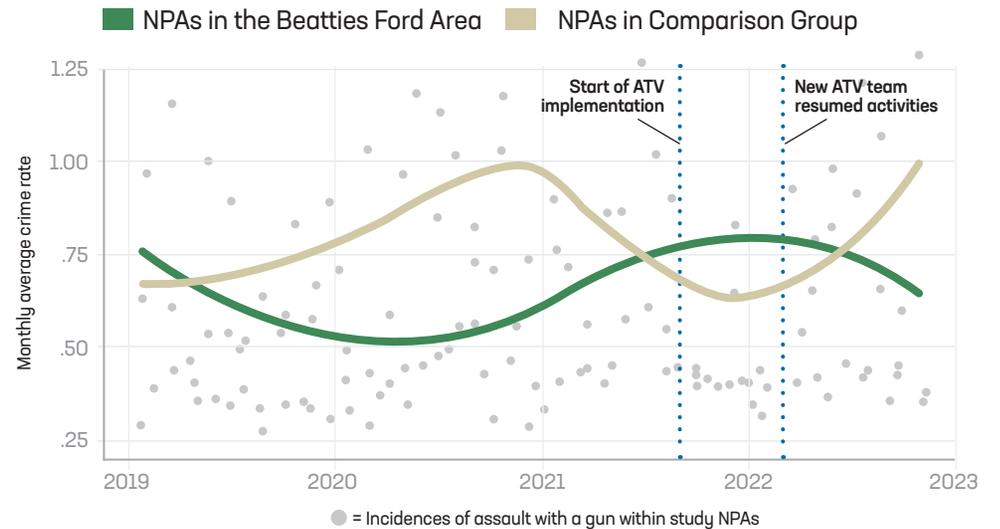


Figure 4: Monthly Average for Aggravated Assault with a Gun Rate





Community-Level Changes

Non-fatal gunshot injuries

The average rate of non-fatal gunshot injuries was consistently higher for the Beatties Ford community NPAs compared to NPAs within the comparison group after 2020. The average rate appears to increase for both groups even after the implementation of ATV, though the rate of increase for NPAs in the comparison group appears to be higher compared to the service area NPAs. The rate of non-fatal gunshot injuries then begins to decrease slightly for NPAs within the Beatties Ford area but continues to increase for NPAs within the comparison.

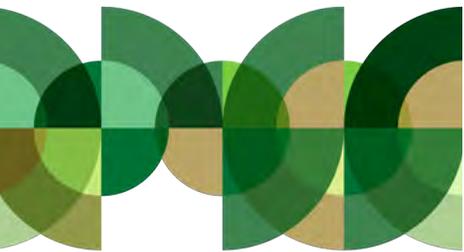
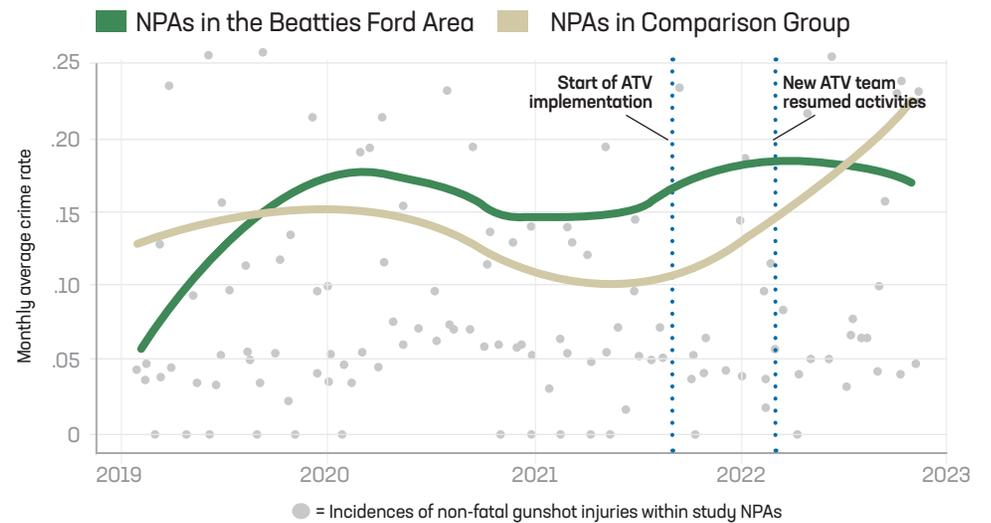


Figure 5: Monthly Average for Non-Fatal Gunshot Injury Rates





Community-Level Changes

Violent crime

When examining the rate of violent crime, which is the combined number of all offenses classified as Part I crimes under the FBI's UCR list, the evaluation team found NPAs in the comparison area had a greater average violent crime rate compared to NPAs in the Beatties Ford community prior to 2021. This trend flipped after a period of consistent decline beginning in mid-2020 with NPAs in the comparison area having a lower rate of monthly violent crime in the beginning months of 2021. This relationship flipped again in early 2022, however, with the monthly violent crime rate now consistently being higher in comparison NPAs compared to service area NPAs.

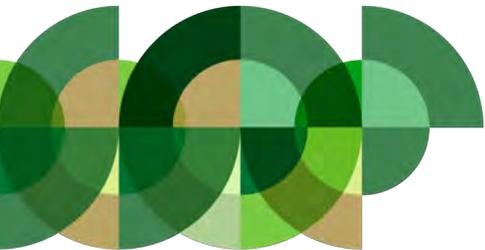
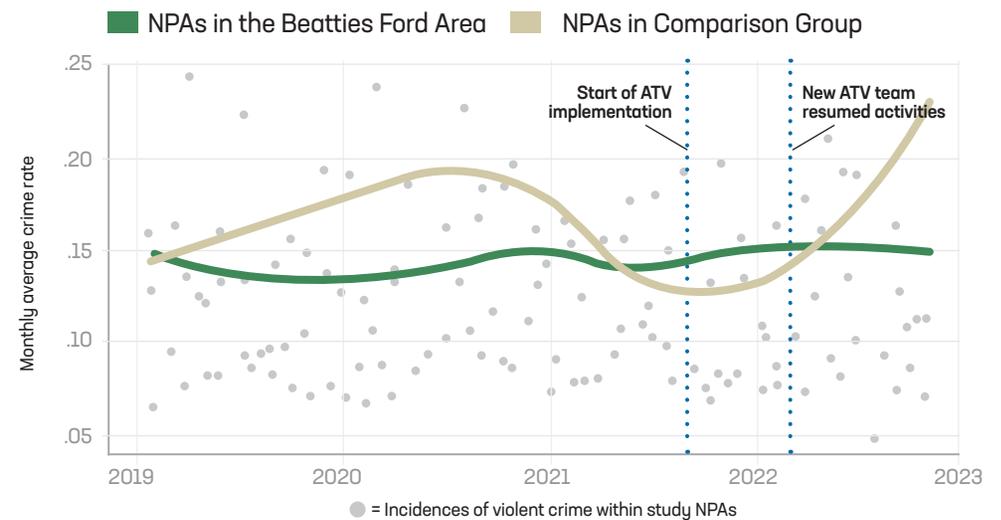


Figure 6: Monthly Average for Violent Crime Rates





Conclusions

Individuals that have worked with the ATV program have acquired knowledge and skills and have exhibited behaviors that protect them from violence. These individuals have developed social and planning skills and competencies, have learned about needed resources in their community, have formed trusted relationships, have shown higher educational achievement and have applied non-violent approaches to conflict resolution.

Also, in examining community violence outcomes, the evaluation team has found a statistically significant difference between the Beatties Ford NPAs and the NPAs in the comparison group as it pertains to homicides

committed with a firearm. This may be attributed to subsequent interventions, increased police presence trailed by ATV programming, which followed a tragic violent event that took place in the service area in 2020. The targeting of resources to the Beatties Ford community to prevent this type of incident from reoccurring may have led to a sharp decrease in this particular crime outcome.

The trends in the other crime outcomes are important to pay attention to as well. When examining the average monthly crime rates the difference between the Beatties Ford NPAs and NPAs in the comparison group appears to increase in the months after the

implementation of ATV for non-fatal gunshot injuries, aggravated assaults, and violent crimes. It appears that NPAs in the comparison group (those representative areas that did not have ATV) experienced higher rates of all of these types of crime compared to Beatties Ford NPAs. Again, examining the monthly average of the crime outcomes cannot speak to significance when it comes to the difference between NPAs and these various crime outcomes but it does illustrate the trend that NPAs within the Beatties Ford area appear to be headed in the right direction when it comes to these outcomes, although we cannot account for all other factors that may also be impacting outcomes.



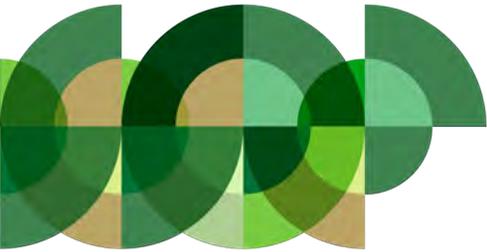
Discussion



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Discussion



Building Relationships and Trust with Individuals and the Community

Relationship and trust building are integral to each program component and to the individual and community level outcomes seen in this evaluation. Violence interrupters use information gathered from the community to learn about and respond to possible violent incidents. They rely heavily on the relationships built in the community to do this work effectively. They also are able to model and teach how to resolve conflicts within these relationships. Outreach workers also work closely with individuals, those at highest risk of being a victim or being a perpetrator of violence, to prevent violent trajectories. Within these trusted relationships, participants are able to learn about resources, learn how to set goals, and how to navigate difficult situations. The research literature supports prioritizing these stable, caring relationships for children in an effort to improve health outcomes and prevent adverse childhood experiences.³¹ Lastly, trust building is imperative to mobilizing the community and changing norms. During interviews, staff relayed that the community has been historically underserved. Building trust with the Beatties Ford community will take time, but is a crucial element to realize the intended effects of this program.

31 Bowers, E.P., Johnson, S.K., Buckingham, M.H. et al. Important Non-parental Adults and Positive Youth Development Across Mid- to Late-Adolescence: The Moderating Effect of Parenting Profiles. *J Youth Adolescence* 43, 897-918 (2014). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-014-0095-x>; Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2019). Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs): Leveraging the Best Available Evidence. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/preventingACEs.pdf>.

32 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022.

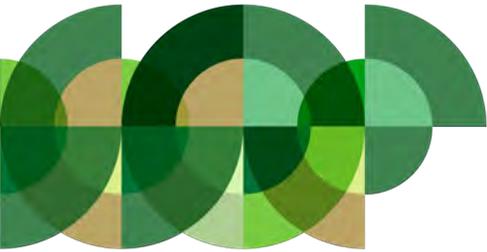
Staff's ability to relate and **to be seen as credible** facilitate the relationship and trust built with ATV participants as well as the greater community. The **training** staff have received have also prepared them to provide participants and the larger community with the knowledge and skill sets aimed to protect them from violence.

Addressing Individual, Relational, Community, and Societal Levels of Prevention

The ATV program currently addresses **individual and relationship factors** that protect community members from being victims or perpetrators of violence. Beyond the scope of ATV, additional resources and intentionality are needed to make strides on **community and societal protective factors**, including creating safe places where people live, learn, work, and play.³² This also includes addressing neighborhood poverty, residential segregation, and instability; financial security, education and employment opportunities, and other policies that affect the structural determinants of health. Additional support to address community and societal level factors that protect against violence would support the individual and relational factors addressed by the ATV team. Working across each of these levels will optimize sustained violence prevention.



Recommendations



Taken together, the results of the process and outcome evaluation offer promising findings for ongoing implementation and success of Alternatives to Violence. Further, conversations with ATV and administrative staff indicate that many barriers have been addressed and improved since the end of the study period. We offer the following recommendations to improve program implementation, and ultimately program effectiveness based on year one data.

- 1.** Support staff in their suggestions for building community trust.

Given the importance of community trust for each component of the program, ongoing trust-building should be a focus of implementing entities. Familiarity, awareness, and visibility emerged as potential contributors to improving trust. Trusting relationships are a key mechanism of program

effectiveness, based on the CVG model.³³ For example, Whitehill and colleagues found that trust and respect were foundational to successful mediations.³⁴

Two recommendations came from staff interviews related to these constructs. The first was a space or center where community members frequent in order to access community residents. The second was a designated program vehicle with ATV logos.

Related to community trust, an additional consideration is how to navigate the relationship between the ATV team and law enforcement. Although it is not uncommon for CVG sites to document mistrust of the police, the Trinidad and Tobago site reported a “synergistic relationship” between the program team and law enforcement (p. 2).³⁵ This could be a concept to explore, perhaps more so after the

program is institutionalized as a trusted part of the Beatties Ford Community.

Increased visibility and awareness of what ATV is doing may also help with trust outside of Beatties Ford, which can relate to the next recommendation.

- 2.** Troubleshoot strategies to improve data entry into the CVG database.

Data and reporting are important for ensuring program effectiveness, accountability in the broader community, and securing ongoing funding for sustainability. CVG database use is also a core implementation component. The evaluation team recommends working with staff to identify what staff need to improve data entry. This may require a more formal assessment or feedback session with ATV and administrative staff. Administrators may also consider connecting with

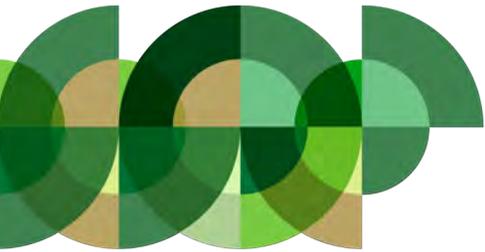
33 Butts, J. A., Gouvis Roman, C., Bostwick, L., & Porter, J. R., 2015.

34 Whitehill, J. M., Webster, D. W., Frattaroli, S., & Parker, E. M. (2013). Interrupting violence: How the CeaseFire program prevents imminent gun violence through conflict mediation. *Journal of Urban Health*, 91(1), 84-95. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11524-013-9796-99>

35 Adams, E.B., & Maguire, E.R. (2023). Qualitative evidence on the implementation of Cure Violence in Trinidad and Tobago. *Prevention Science*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s1121-023-01500-w>



Recommendations



CVG for strategies found to be successful in other implementation locations or request more consistent technical support with using the database. It should be noted that quality data entry has been identified as a challenge during other CVG program evaluations as well.³⁶

- 3.** Assess whether those at higher risk of violence in Beatties Ford are truly being identified.

Many of the participants in the CVG database did not meet the minimum criteria for program enrollment established by CVG. Because staff capacity is limited, it is important that the individuals at highest risk of violence are being identified and recruited for program participation. ATV and administrative staff could collaborate with the already partnering schools to administer widespread assessments of risk to more systematically recruit and enroll those at highest risk. ATV

could also partner with institutions in the community to identify and target youth in the service area that have been exposed to the child welfare and juvenile justice system, a vulnerable population.³⁷ These strategies could improve program fidelity and ultimately program effectiveness. Prioritizing individuals at high risk was identified as a challenge in other evaluations as well.³⁸ There may also be an opportunity to assess if the screening assessment administered is accurately identifying the target population (i.e., those at greatest risk).

Relatedly, it would be important to identify reasons why organizations aren't referring to ATV. Based on CVG data, participants aren't often referred to ATV by other organizations. This may change as local organizations become familiar with the program. However, this could be a missed opportunity to identify those at highest risk of violence.

- 4.** Be prepared for or prevent staff turnover.

The core program components are tied to ATV staff members. For example, quality data entry is dependent on staff. Participants are also tied to staff as the model currently operates. When the first ATV staff team left, their participants were no longer a part of the ATV program. It is not clear whether mentorship continues beyond formal programming. It would be important to ensure a plan for supporting participants when their key staff contact leaves. Alternatively, because the success of the program is dependent on staff, we recommend that ATV continues to invest in staff leadership and skill development. This was discussed as a goal of administrative staff during the focus group.

³⁶ Maguire, E.R., Oakley, M.T., Corsaro, N. (2018). Evaluating Cure Violence in Trinidad and Tobago. *Inter-American Development Bank*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18235/0001427>.

³⁷ Herz, D C., & Dierkhising, C. B. (2018). OJJDP Dual System Youth Design Study: Summary of Findings and Recommendations for Pursuing a National Estimate of Dual System Youth. <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/grants/252717.pdf>; Cutuli, J.J., et al., (2016). From foster care to juvenile justice: Exploring characteristics of youth in three cities, *Children and Youth Services Review*, Volume 67, 2016, Pages 84-94. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2016.06.001>

³⁸ Maguire, E.R., Oakley, M.T., Corsaro, N., 2018.



Recommendations

- 5.** Address structural and other risk factors for violence that the team doesn't have the capacity to address by itself.

The ATV staff emphasized the effects of historical and current marginalization and under-resourcing of the Beatties Ford area on violent outcomes. Although the initial evaluation of ATV shows some promise for reducing violence, it does not comprehensively address risk factors of violence, many of which are tied to socioeconomic status and underinvestment in Black communities and other communities of color. Violence is a factor of multiple systems and is a bigger issue than any

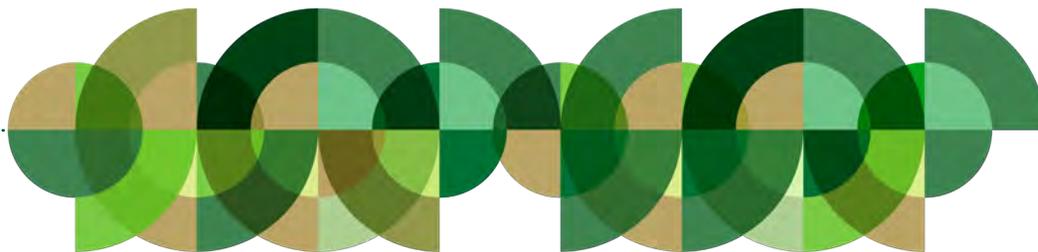
one organization can meaningfully or sustainably address on their own. To optimize the prevention of violence, the community needs investment without fear of resident displacement. Investment might look like:

- Community green spaces
- Access to quality affordable housing
- Increased resources for schools, such as school psychologists. In line with national trends, high school youth are struggling psychologically. The percentage of students who seriously considered suicide in North Carolina increased from 19% in 2019 to 22% in 2021.³⁹

- 6.** Consider longer periods of initial assessment and funding.

Two of the previous recommendations—trust building and identifying those at highest risk—may relate to time. It takes time to build trust, relationships, and referral systems. Additionally, given unique qualities in every community, it also takes time to learn and adapt the program in a way that adheres to the program components. Taking the adequate amount of time to address trust, relationships, and community differences may lead to greater program effectiveness, as well as optimize the program to meet the needs of the community.

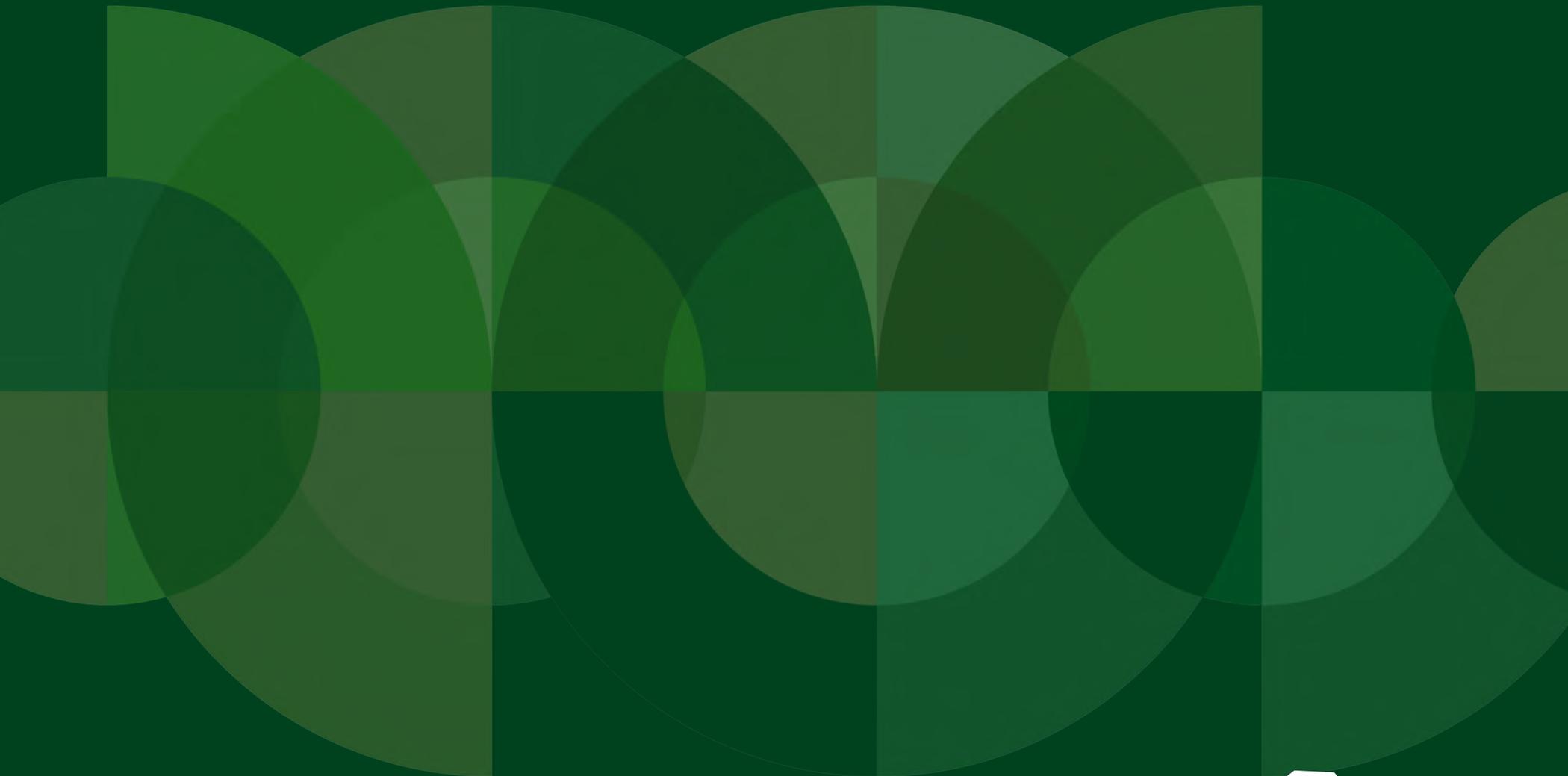
³⁹ Dillon, A.P. (2023). Youth Risk Behavior Survey shows continued student mental health concerns. *North State Journal*.





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