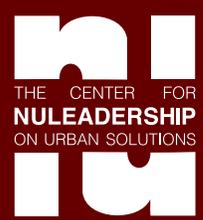


THE PROMISE OF CURE VIOLENCE



Prepared for the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (October 2016)

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK IS NOW POISED TO STRENGTHEN AND FORTIFY THE PROMISE OF CURE VIOLENCE TO NOT ONLY REDUCE GUN VIOLENCE, BUT DISMANTLE THE WORKINGS OF VIOLENCE IN OUR SOCIETY.

DEAR FRIEND,

Welcome to The Promise of Cure Violence, a report intended to outline the encompassing promise of the Crisis Management System (CMS) launched in 2012 by New York City Council's Task Force to Combat Gun Violence.

This report culminates a six-month assessment that included site visit interviews, presentations, group discussions, meetings, lengthy observations, material reviews and attendance at community events and shooting responses. More than anything, however, this report is a witness to the "Promise of Cure Violence" that the Center for NuLeadership on Urban Solutions had the privilege of experiencing with the CMS in 18 neighborhoods with the highest rates of gun violence.

Cure Violence began with the recognition that, daily, throughout the city of New York, impoverished communities live the repercussions of a mass incarceration phenomenon that includes criminalization, over-policing, disinvestment, and ultimately, gun-violence. Then the promise of Cure Violence came into focus when "the system" and "the streets" responded by linking arms for transformative change through the Crisis Management System.

Perhaps more than ever before the City of New York is poised to strengthen and fortify the democratic edict to reduce gun violence and dismantle the workings of violence in our society. A concrete pathway for fulfilling this stands before us. Right now. The Crisis Management System gifts us with a unique platform for a network of credible messengers to transform into incredible messengers, who herald catalytic change for community development and systemic transformation.

What follows is a blueprint for the Promise of Cure Violence to erect futures beyond prisons and violence for our children. We are honored to join the Cure Violence community in making this a reality and a future in the now.

In Promise,



Dr. Divine Pryor
Executive Director

THE CRISIS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM HAS CREATED A UNIQUE AND COURAGEOUS PLATFORM FOR A NETWORK OF CREDIBLE MESSENGERS TO BECOME INCREDIBLE MESSENGERS, WHO WILL IN TURN BECOME THE CATALYSTS FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION.

BACKGROUND

CENTER FOR NULEADERSHIP ON URBAN SOLUTIONS (CNUS)

The first of its kind in the country, the Center for NuLeadership on Urban Solutions (CNUS) is an independent research, advocacy and training think tank, founded and developed by academic professionals with experience inside the criminal justice system. Formerly at Medgar Evers College in the City University of New York, CNUS is now an autonomous 501(c)(3) non-profit institution located in the Bedford-Stuyvesant community of Brooklyn, New York. CNUS is staffed by people directly impacted by the criminal justice system.

CNUS' mission is to shift the paradigm and practice of public safety from one of criminal justice to Human Justice. The concept of Human Justice, coined by CNUS in 2012, is an outcomes-driven social change framework to guide and redirect human and financial resources away from punishment-oriented systems and pedagogy and toward more effective, humane, equitable and sustainable solutions. The Human Justice framework is created by integrating the fundamental principles of international human rights which recognize the inherent dignity and equal and inalienable rights of all people, with the concrete systematic vehicles that actualize Human Development, which focuses on achieving well-being and enlarging one's capabilities, choices and opportunities while "combating processes that impoverish people or underpin oppression and structural injustice" (2011 Human Development Report published for the United Nations Development Programme).



PROJECT INITIATION, PRESENTATION OF CNUS' TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES & SITE VISITS

CNUS works to achieve Human Justice transformation at three levels through what we call a CSI methodology: Community Empowerment, System Realignment/Accountability and Individual Transformation:

A. **Community Empowerment:** Directing resources to targeted neighborhoods to achieve sustainable community development, reinvestment and self-determination in the areas of education, economic development, civic engagement and social services. This involves creating a pool of community stakeholders equipped, trained and adequately resourced to interface with system stakeholders and participate meaningfully and equitably in the decision-making process.

B. **System Realignment/Accountability:** A principled mechanism of oversight for quality control, data collection, performance evaluation and community partnership. This holds the system accountable, analyzing system behavior and forging system-community partnerships to arrive at solutions and outcomes that expand and enable Community Development and Empowerment, and Individual Transformation.

C. **Individual Transformation:** Individuals are at the center of any policy, advocacy, practice or program that results in expanded and sustainable life-improving opportunities and affirmative support networks.

Despite a sharp decline in the violent crime rate in New York City, by 2012, certain neighborhoods continued to suffer from high rates of gun violence. That year, the New York City Council's Task Force to Combat Gun Violence responded by launching a new Crisis Management System (CMS) in five New York City neighborhoods. The CMS approach is a violence reduction program, modeled in part on the Chicago-based Cure Violence (CV), with additional wrap-around services that focus on employment, education, health, mental health and legal assistance.

The Cure Violence model is a gun violence reduction program premised on the notion that people learn violent behavior through everyday interactions with friends and family members, particularly those they most respect. The program engages individuals with respect and credibility in communities to act as Credible Messengers (CM), specifically as Outreach Workers (OW) and Violence Interrupters (VI). The CMs reach out to people who may be more susceptible to violence and use their relationships and social supports to dissuade them from engaging in violence.

In 2015, CNUS was contracted by the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice (MOCJ) to provide professional development training to 18 Crisis Management System/Cure Violence (CV) sites in New York City. CNUS was selected to conduct the professional development training because of its combined expertise on direct prison/street experience and policy development, as well as its targeted training and technical assistance to community and system stakeholders. Given this unique expertise and experience, CNUS was the ideal organization to assess the CV program and develop the professional development training for CMs.

ASSESSMENT

APPROACH & PLAN



To ensure that any professional development training designed by CNUS adhere to its approach and philosophy, the organization proposed that an assessment of the CV program be conducted. The assessment was designed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the current program philosophy and practice—as understood and implemented by all levels of staff; existing program content, culture and capacity; internal and external communications infrastructure; mapping of current staff and community partners; and the community partners’ perception, capacity, function and their concrete role and involvement in optimizing the success of the CV model.

Understanding that central to the success of any training and/or technical assistance program is the need to establish real community engagement and trust, CNUS staff prioritized relationship-building with the staff of each CV site. At the start of each site visit, each participant received a clear explanation of CNUS’s process, timeline and role to ensure transparency, honest dialogue and information exchange. Participants were told that information from the assessment would be used to inform professional development training needs and content developed by CNUS through its technical assistance contract.

Because program managers play an important role in coordinating and liaising among the various components of the program and all involved parties, CNUS staff began the interview process with each site’s Program Manager (PM). After meeting with the PMs, CNUS staff led a second round of site visits to meet with the Outreach Workers and Violence Interrupters. The goal was to document the training needs, strategies and preferences across sites, while also creating a platform to hear the collective voices of program managers, outreach worker supervisors, outreach workers and violence interrupters. The collective input not only informed the assessment review report, but will also influence CNUS’ training menu for facilitating “human/leadership development.”

While interview protocols were developed, our site visits adhered to the following guidelines:

1. Establish CNUS as legitimate and authentic partners by demonstrating that its professional expertise stems from its lived experience—in the streets, prisons and impacted communities—as well as study and applied practice in crime and violence reduction.
2. Build trust and rapport by sharing organizational history, mission, theory of change; and explaining our commitment to confidentiality and protection of identity.
3. Ensure transparency by explaining our approach, methodology and ultimate objectives around promoting Community Empowerment, System Realignment and Individual Transformation methodology (CSI).

PROJECT INITIATION, PRESENTATION OF CNUS' TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE SERVICES & SITE VISITS

The 3 phases of the scope of work include:

PHASE 1: Project Initiation, Presentation of CNUS' Technical Assistance Services & Site Visits

- I. Project Initiation and Project Coordination Meetings with city agencies: CNUS' first major task was to meet with key city agencies in charge of providing administrative and technical assistance support to the Cure Violence sites. This involved a series of phone calls with the assigned contacts from each agency: New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH), Health and Hospitals Corporation (HHC) and Mayor's Office on Criminal Justice (MOCJ) to identify the tasks and activities that fit best with the budget, timeline, and expectations.
- II. Introduction and Presentation of the Center for NuLeadership on Urban Solutions (CNUS) and our forthcoming Technical Assistance Services and Scope of Work to Program Managers (PM) and Outreach Work Supervisors (OWS): After meeting with agencies involved and clarifying their respective roles in the implementation and management of the Cure Violence model in each site, CNUS worked with DOHMH to present and introduce its work, role and process of engagement for the program personnel of each CV site. The initial presentation, made primarily to PMs and OWS's, was an important step toward gaining buy-in from key CV staff and laying the groundwork for successful, comprehensive and authentic assessment site visits.
- III. Site Visits with Program Managers at each Cure Violence Site: Once CNUS conducted an introduction of its work and forthcoming TA services in a group setting, it then followed up with each CV site's program manager to schedule a site visit. The site visit occurred at the designated CV site with the program manager and included other relevant staff deemed necessary by the program manager. The site visit meetings (lasting 1.5 to 3 hours) served to introduce CNUS' technical assistance service and learn about the ecosystem of the CV model implementation at their specific site.
- IV. Site Visits with Outreach Workers/Outreach Worker Supervisors and Violence Interrupters: A second round of site visits were conducted with the outreach workers and violence interrupters. The site visits occurred at the designated CV site with the credible messengers (i.e., Outreach Workers/Outreach Work Supervisors and Violence Interrupters). CNUS made clear to the contact staff (PM or OWS) that it was an initial meeting to both introduce its TA service and learn about the ecosystem of the CV model implementation at their specific site.

PHASE 2

OBSERVATION/PARTICIPATION IN EVENTS & TRAININGS

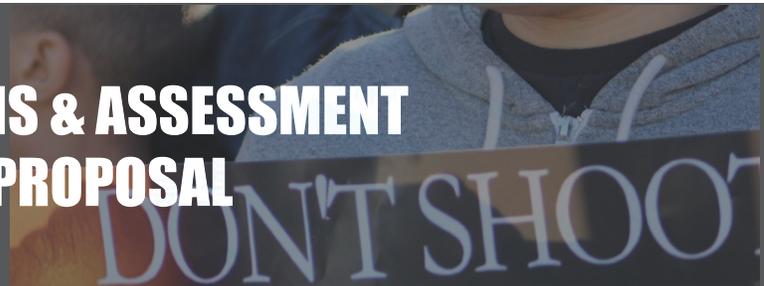


PHASE 2: Observation/Participation in Events and Trainings

- I. CV events: Once CNUS met and established an open and trusting relationship with CV staff members (PM's, OWS', OW's and VI's), they asked staff members at each CV site to identify and suggest meetings, forums, community events and gatherings that CNUS staff could observe.
- II. DOHMH trainings: CNUS attended scheduled trainings facilitated and organized by DOHMH, such as a weeklong PM training and OWS training.
- III. Review of Training materials/manuals: CNUS reviewed training materials/manuals used at trainings and/or disseminated to CV staff members and CV sites. They assessed the fidelity of interpretation and implementation as well as the relevance of the training material as perceived and expressed by CV staff members, particularly by the credible messengers.

PHASE 3

INFORMATION EXCHANGE SESSIONS & ASSESSMENT REPORT WITH REFINED TRAINING PROPOSAL



PHASE 3: Information Exchange Sessions & Assessment Report with Refined Training Proposal

- I. Information Exchange Sessions (IES): CNUS worked with DOHMH and MOCJS to present an introduction of Project ReNu, CNUS' civic restoration project, at the annual CV retreat. Following the presentation were informal group discussions and consultations with CV staff from various sites who were present. CNUS followed up with each CV site for an individualized phone consultation to discuss interest in future training for trainers, community service provisions and service for staff.
- II. Final Report: The findings and recommendations are summarized in a final report, featuring a series of leadership and professional development trainings that will help deepen and expand the impact and promise of the Crisis Management System.

GROWING THE PROMISE OF CURE VIOLENCE

The following findings and recommendations are based on the review and analyses of the collective feedback shared by CV staff across all 18 sites along with observations of trainings and events, and review of materials that were conducted by CNUS over a period of five months.

The recommendations are categorized using CNUS' theory of change that calls for transformation to take place on three levels, simultaneously: Community, System and Individual. Applied to the CV context, they are:

- 1) Community Engagement, Development and Empowerment
- 2) System Realignment and Enhancement, and
- 3) Individual Transformation and Leadership Development

The findings and recommendations are accompanied by a list of leadership and capacity development offerings. This is not an exhaustive list but represents recurrent themes and opportunities for further short- and long-term growth.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT & EMPOWERMENT

GROUP 1: THE CURE VIOLENCE STAFF COMMUNITY

- 1) Amplify and empower the CV team culture and impact by re-engaging and clarifying the definition and application of “credibility” for all CV staff positions.
 - a) The CV team formula is pivotal in continuing the successful outcomes related to gun violence reduction in the catchment areas. CMS is equipped to clarify and qualify how CV staff members must demonstrate “credibility” in their respective positions.
 - b) CNUS recommends updating CV training materials/facilitation to include “credibility” instruction for CV staff members. Clear and instructive language, definition and examples will help bolster the professional and leadership development efforts taking place within the CMS.

“YOU WEAR THIS STUFF LIKE LAYERS OF CLOTHES, IT GETS DEEP. THIS IS REAL EMOTIONS, REAL PEOPLE, REAL FAMILIES, DEALING WITH REAL ISSUES IN THE COMMUNITY THAT WE ARE TRYING TO CHANGE. IT AFFECTS US ALL. . .WE HAD TO LITERALLY CLEAN THE STREET THE OTHER DAY, A YOUNG BROTHER GOT SHOT, THE FIRE DEPARTMENT WAS SUPPOSED TO HOSE IT DOWN WHERE HE WAS KILLED, WE HAD TO CLEAN HIS BRAINS OFF THE FLOOR, SO THAT WE COULD BRING HIS MOM OUT TO DO A ‘SHOOTING RESPONSE.’ WHAT DO WE DO WITH THAT TRAUMA?”

– CV staff member

- 2) Establish a formal “CV think tank” series for strategic cross-pollination of CV sites for best practice, collaborative strategy, CV model innovation, and peer and senior leadership support.
 - a) There is a strongly expressed desire to exchange ideas, innovations, opportunities and strategies across sites. Increasing intentional and strategic interactions, and supporting well-facilitated cross-pollination among the sites can strengthen the CMS’ infrastructure and CV culture for greater impact and innovation.
 - b) CNUS recommends establishing a CV think tank series to facilitate and formalize cross-site peer/senior leadership exchange practice; address outstanding work and staff development challenges that emerge in CV work; and develop recommendations for transforming the CV model by best practices.
- 3) CMS can benefit greatly from making all CV staff positions full-time to fortify the impact and growth potential of Cure Violence.
 - a) CV staff at all levels agree that the VIs face and take the highest level of risk in their work. Given their close proximity to the life and past of violence, the VIs are chosen to serve as the first point of contact and conduit for the high-risk individuals to engage with the CV site’s activities and services.
 - b) Increasing the VI’s capacity is seminal for deepening the CV model’s proven success in three important ways. First, moving VIs from part-time to full-time, with enduring team support and effective supervision, can yield more innovative and wider-reaching outreach strategies and impact for successful recruitment. Secondly, a full-time position provides a more practical platform for stability, as well as leadership and professional development for the VIs. Thirdly, the power of transformative modeling was soundly demonstrated in every site visit interview.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT & EMPOWERMENT

GROUP 2: SERVICE PROVIDER COMMUNITY

- 4) Educate and engage the wrap-around service provider community on the model and principles of Cure Violence.
 - a) Ensuring the availability of adequate and appropriate services is critical for the high-risk individuals that CV sites engage. For the service provider community to understand the context and needs of CV participants, it is recommended that they study the CV model and principles for relevance and effective delivery. This will help facilitate improved communication, accessibility and customization to optimize wrap around services for participants in CV program.

“A TARGETED AND MULTIFACETED INVESTMENT IN THE VIS’ “CAPACITY FOR CHANGE”—FINANCIALLY, EDUCATIONALLY, AND PROFESSIONALLY—WILL PROVE TO BE THE “LOUDEST” SIGNALING FOR CV POPULATIONS AND GIVEN THEIR PREVIOUS REPUTATIONS AND SOCIAL TIES IN THE COMMUNITY, QUITE POSSIBLY THE MOST EFFECTIVE STRATEGY TO DISRUPT AND INFLUENCE THE CULTURAL NORM.”

– CV staff member

- 5) Expand the service provider community by identifying and capacitating community based organizations and programs that are in line with the CV mission and population.
 - a) The Promise of Cure Violence rests with strengthening and diversifying the community infrastructure for service delivery, social ties, civic engagement and economic development. CNUS recommends that the administering city agencies, in partnership with the CV sites, seek out and help train and capacitate community-based service providers who have the cultural competence, relational history and social service delivery network to service the CV catchment community and participants.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT & EMPOWERMENT

GROUP 3: CURE VIOLENCE CATCHMENT COMMUNITY

- 6) Educate, engage and organize the catchment community's residents through Cure Violence Community Education Series.
 - a) Shooting response provides a powerful mobilization platform for presenting a unified front around a message of intolerance for gun violence in the community. However, the current community mobilization platform can strengthen further through a Cure Violence Community Education Series that equips the community members with the knowledge, skills and tools for addressing, disrupting and healing from the day-to-day challenges and conditions of violence. The Education series will amplify the branding and promotion of Cure Violence principles, practice and impact in the catchment communities for broader and deeper support and engagement.
 - b) The facilitation and leadership provided by the credible messengers will strengthen the relationship between the CV sites and community members, while also providing an opportunity for community members to relate to credible messengers more explicitly as educators and connectors to services.
 - c) The Cure Violence Education Series will also help provide an applied context for CV staff members to develop workshop facilitation, community education and public speaking skills in the process.

"WHEN DO YOU GET TO HIRE A GROUP OF FORMER GANG/GUN INVOLVED PEOPLE AND GET THEM TO ACTUALLY WORK IN THE VERY PLACES WHERE THEY USED TO RUN THE STREETS, BUT NOW TO TRANSFORM LIVES AND THE COMMUNITY, I MEAN IN A STRUCTURED WAY AS A TEAM? THIS IS HUGE! . . .WE ARE LIKE THE VINES AND THE VEINS OF THE COMMUNITY WHERE WE WORK... GROWING OUR DIGNITY AND RESOURCES WILL GROW OUR COMMUNITIES, IN TURN."

– CV staff member

SYSTEM REALIGNMENT & CV MODEL ENHANCEMENT

- 7) Integrate Harm Reduction and Restorative Justice practice into the Crisis Management System.
 - a) The Cure Violence model rests on identifying and disrupting actual and/or potential incidents of gun violence such that the cultural norm around violence shifts. While the Cure Violence crisis management strategy has proven invaluable and effective in disrupting and preventing gun violence, the CV model can benefit greatly from an accompanying practice that grounds day-to-day interactions and incidents that are not considered “high-risk” or “crisis”.
 - b) Introducing tools and resources related to Harm Reduction and Restorative Justice practice will move the model beyond crisis management, and equip the CV staff and community members with navigation tools and skills that promote healthier behavior and norms.
 - c) Trainings related to Harm Reduction and Restorative Justice practice will also enhance the credible messengers’ professional standing and mobility in the fields of healthcare, social work, social justice and drug treatment service/drug policy.
 - d) CNUS recommends an introduction and integration of Harm Reduction and culturally competent Restorative Justice praxis in the CV training materials as well as in the community education and engagement work.
- 8) Expand the definition and analysis of violence, and develop accompanying data collection protocols that capture the full range of preventative and intervention work being conducted in the field, that are in turn evaluated for effective outcomes.
 - a) The current definition of violence primarily focuses on shootings and interpersonal violence without a mechanism to explicate or document the underlying connections to the economic and social conditions that lead to violence.
 - b) There was a strong desire, across the 18 sites, to have the antecedents to violence become a part of the expanded definition of violence. This goes hand-in-hand with a recurrent sentiment that the preventative work that the CV staff performs in the field is hard to track or lacks a tracking mechanism altogether.
 - c) CNUS recommends developing data collection protocols to capture the full range of preventative and intervention work being conducted in the field for subsequent evaluation and transformation into effective outcomes.

“OUR PROFESSIONALS TAKE GUNS OUT OF THEIR HANDS AND GIVE THEM JOBS OR TRY OUR HARDEST TO. WE TAKE GUNS OUT OF THEIR HANDS TO GIVE THEM TRAININGS. WE TAKE GUNS OUT THEIR HANDS TO GIVE THEM LOVE. WE PUT OUR LIFE ON THE LINE EVERY DAY.”

– CV staff member

- 9) Facilitate greater clarity and alignment between CV sites and host organizations.
- a) The role of host agencies has been vital in ensuring that CV sites can launch in a timely manner, with a full range of administrative support systems that allow for effective and efficient program operation. After more than four years in operation, CMS is positioned to review and benefit from lessons learned, in order to strengthen and refine the partnership between the CV program and the hosting agency.
 - b) CV operations and programming will become more nimble with greater alignment between host site and CV policies and procedures—there is a wide-ranging variability among CV sites with host agencies in terms of program capacity support and culture of partnership/ sponsorship.
 - c) CNUS recommends developing a memorandum of understanding for increased clarity regarding the host agency and CV site’s roles and responsibilities, and fiscal, program and personnel policies that are specific to CV work. MOCJ appears to be best positioned to serve as the administering agency to guide and monitor this process.
- 10) Provide executive and senior management with an introductory, but experiential learning experience on the Cure Violence model.
- a) There is almost-unanimous agreement across sites, especially those operating under a host organization, that executive and senior management staff could benefit from increased understanding of the CV model, the communities it engages and the types of resources necessary for the program to operate most effectively.
 - b) CNUS recommends using an experiential training approach that integrates observation and reflection on case studies, role-playing, sensitivity and awareness activities and simulation exercises.
- 11) Cultural literacy related to the CV servicing populations and the CV neighborhoods were viewed as critical elements to the success of the program.
- a) To broaden understanding between CV staff and the executive and/or senior management staff, the latter should receive orientation training on the CV model, its programmatic elements and the unique needs the program requires in order to be most impactful. In addition, CV staff strongly recommends that the executive or management staff of host sites tour the catchment area for their CV program and participate in CV events to gain a more comprehensive and well-rounded understanding of the program. Finally, many felt that executive and senior management staff should also receive tailored trainings facilitated by long-time community leaders of the CV project.

b) Program Alignment and Cultural Literacy - to create organizational program alignment and cultural literacy, DOHMH can play a coordinating role in providing all executive staff training on the principles and practice of the CV model. This training should be designed to help participants understand the cultural needs and priorities of the CV communities and how those might differ from the other communities they may service. CNUS recommends using an experiential training approach that integrates observation and reflection on case studies, role-playing, sensitivity and awareness activities and simulation exercises.

12) Expand the Role of Affected Communities in the CV Site Selection Process.

a) Using the criteria and protocols established by administering agencies, CV site selection process could potentially transition into an open Request For Proposal process engaging a community panel of seasoned CV experts.

INDIVIDUAL TRANSFORMATION LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

13) Establish a standardized pay scale range and benefits package for CV staff.

a) CV staff mentioned overall challenges with the pay rate and lack of healthcare benefits for credible messengers, particularly for VIs, who put their life on the line. An overwhelming number of VIs (and many supervisors reverberated the point) highlighted that they are “working full-time hours with part-time pay and no healthcare.” Similarly, CV staff mentioned that many of the hours they put into their jobs are not deemed “official” work hours and are, therefore, uncompensated. Often this means working 12-13-hour days but being compensated for only 8 hours.

b) CV staff from all sites expressed keen interest in receiving educational stipend allowance for pursuing higher education or additional professional development courses outside of work hours.

c) CNUS recommends examining current salary and benefits allowance provided to CM’s across all CV sites to establish greater parity among similar CV staff positions across the 18 sites, particularly for VIs. Additionally, CNUS recommends implementing certification partnerships and programs for pipelining career development pathways for CMs.

CNUS RECOMMENDS DEVELOPING A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING FOR INCREASED CLARITY REGARDING THE HOST AGENCY AND CV SITE’S ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES, AND FISCAL, PROGRAM AND PERSONNEL POLICIES THAT ARE SPECIFIC TO CV WORK. MOCJ APPEARS TO BE BEST POSITIONED TO SERVE AS THE ADMINISTERING AGENCY TO GUIDE AND MONITOR THIS PROCESS.

- 14) Credible messengers need multi-faceted and non-traditional healing support.
- a) While there are provisions within the CV model for trauma-informed care for credible messengers, CV staff had suggestions about ways in which trauma supports can be further enhanced.
 - b) CNUS recommends collecting regular and critical feedback from the CM's on the trauma support they receive to adjust for improvement and relevance according to work realities.
- 15) On leadership and/professional development trainings, CV staff expressed avid interest in gaining greater understanding of how the various trainings provided to CMs further their career development and the impact these trainings have on their overall career trajectory.
- a) There is consensus across sites on the value of training. CV staff felt that training and staff development should be required to become a CM and made explicit when hiring and recruiting. In addition, many underscored that case management skills and strategies should be introduced to CMs and provided with trainings.
 - b) Staff recommended more ways in which they can be included in the results of evaluations and/or trainings. Establishing a more deliberate feedback loop and consistent communication will allow lessons learned from trainings and evaluations to be more broadly shared.
 - c) Proactive steps should be taken to support credible messengers and increase their level of institutional credibility and professionalism. Credible messengers may not always have professional expertise in the "traditional" sense but they have tremendous experience and expertise in engaging individuals who are labeled as being high-risk and gun and/or gang-involved. Their ability to work with community members who are armed and may engage in violent situations at any moment requires strategy, skills and a level of professionalism that should be recognized both in community and institutional settings. Credible messengers stressed that the notion of what it means to be a "professional" must be contextualized. In their roles, outreach is made "to hi-profilers, shooters, drug dealers, and the whole nine," and they have to come to them "street" not in three-piece suits. "That does not mean we are not professionals, we have a strategy in place, we have expertise and skills we are exercising in this context." Professional skills are required to know how to approach a person who may or may not have a gun or how to engage an armed individual so that they are willing to hand over their gun. At the same time, they all expressed a need for having a structured space for continuously refining and further honing these skills with seasoned CV leaders/experts.

"WE WORK WITH PEOPLE WHO HAVE SEEN THEIR KIDS MURDERED, LOST THEIR HOMES BECAUSE THEY CAN'T GO TO WORK BECAUSE THEY ARE MENTALLY AND EMOTIONALLY UNSTABLE, HAVE HEART PROBLEMS, OR ARE DIABETIC AND HAVE NO MEANS FOR ANY OF THESE THINGS TO BE ADDRESSED. THERE IS NOT A PLACE OF STABILITY TO ADDRESS ALL THESE LIFE THINGS FROM. WE NEED PSYCHIATRISTS, WELLNESS SUPPORT, ALL THAT STUFF, AS WE LOSE AND FACE SO MUCH, BUT SOCIETY DOESN'T SEE THAT."
– CV staff member

- d) Currently, CV staff participate in numerous trainings, some of which have not been accredited or officially recognized as city agency trainings. These training opportunities, while helpful in strengthening the skills of CV staff, can be even more beneficial and transferrable in other professional settings. Staff interviewed mentioned that certificates awarded by city agencies such as DOHMH, HHC and MOCJ could legitimize their work and have the potential to expand their opportunities for workforce mobility. Staff also expressed an interest in having administering agencies provide credible messengers with certificates that validate their experiential skills as a way of recognizing the value of this time in terms of establishing credibility and serving as a community resource.
- e) A number of sites expressed a need for financial resources and innovative training support for engaging youth and young adults who are engaged in or affiliated with gun violence.
- f) CNUS recommends that the training designs be more timely, contextual, “hybrid” and blended. For example, trainings designed as “real time” coaching sessions—that grapple with specificities of the day-to-day interactions and experiences of VIs and OWs rather than more generic types of classroom training—will be better received by the vast majority of CV staff.

PROGRAMS OFFERINGS

LEADERSHIP & CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT TRAINING SERIES

The following section outlines a proposed menu of leadership and capacity development training series. The menu was developed in response to the assessment process, findings and recommendations. The training modules will prioritize implementing a training-for-trainers approach and apply a “blended” approach that integrates the training content into the current workflow. We anticipate that each CV site will choose the training most appropriate for their needs and developments.

1) Project ReNu Civic Restoration Service and Training: The nuts and bolts of becoming employable with a criminal conviction history—from knowing the employment laws and rights for protection against discrimination to getting the New York state-issued certificates of rehabilitation to developing a personal and professional narrative and biography to personal/professional portfolio building tools.

Description

Project ReNu program services help remove barriers to employment, public housing and voting rights for people with criminal convictions. Specifically, the program helps individuals with criminal record history obtain, review and/or repair their records of arrest. This process helps these individuals determine which certificates of rehabilitation—certificate of relief from disabilities or certificate of good conduct—they are eligible for. Thereafter, the program helps individuals apply for and obtain certificates of rehabilitation.

The key components of the Project ReNu services are conducive to skills development in the areas of RAP sheet review/repair, facilitation, advocacy, legal rights navigation, communications, personal and professional narrative coaching (i.e., training for trainers ingredients). The specific elements comprise i) how to review/repair RAP sheets; ii) how to put together a complete and compelling application for one of the Certificates of Rehabilitation; iii) how to coach someone with criminal conviction history to develop an advocacy narrative for personal statement, job interviews and presentations; iv) how to build a social capital portfolio; and v) how to conduct an interactive Know Your Rights workshop around employment and police encounters.

CNUS recommends integrating the services of the Project ReNu program into the Cure Violence community education, organizing and service work. At the same time, CNUS will train and coach the CV staff members to deliver the program services in their day-to-day work. This type of blended training approach broadens the tools available to violence interrupters and creates concrete and viable pathways for individuals trying to move away from the life of violence and crime.

Duration

- Services would be rendered during two visit sessions, each session lasting 3 to 4 hours.
 - a) Minimum number of participants required: 8
- Training staff to become service providers includes 5 days of training that will cover the following skills objectives. Each participant will also receive a completion certificate granted by CNUS and a partnering city agency, to be determined. By the end of this training series, participants will have learned and practiced the following skills and knowledge base:
 - RAP sheet review/repair and counseling skills
 - Demonstration of accurate understanding of the laws and rights related to employment discrimination protection, obtaining certificates of rehabilitation, criminal record sealing and police encounters
 - Presentation, public speaking and advocacy skills
 - Interviewing and narrative coaching skills

2) Community/Youth Engagement, Education and Empowerment Tools

Description

This training considers how a single individual or group of individuals, inspired with passion, analysis and a clear vision can initiate change and transformation on multiple levels.

The training introduces participants to the various ways in which people are drawn to an issue and how that issue can be used to organize, mobilize and direct the actions and resources of targeted leaders, stakeholders or the general public.

This specialized training integrates advocacy, social networking, civic engagement and outreach skills and helps participants recognize the ways they are able to influence positive change—at the individual, community and institutional levels—toward achieving concrete outcomes. The training reflects theories of organizational change that involve the art and science of participatory action research as it strengthens a community’s capacity to comprehend, anticipate and actualize positive potential. The training demonstrates how directed focus on repeated success creates new, affirming energy for amplifying potential and actualizing advancement towards stated goals.

Skills Objectives

By the end of this training series, participants will have learned and practiced the following skills and knowledge base:

- Participatory Action Research principles
- Community outreach and engagement concepts and skills
- Asset mapping tools and skills
- Surveying and interviewing skills
- Group and workshop facilitation skills
- Event planning skills
- Basic communications and material development and production skills
- Media relations concepts and skills

Duration

- Three full-day trainings that include applied field work
- A completion certificate will be issued by CNUS and an affiliate academic or government institution

3) Organizational Capacity Building

Description

This training will provide basic and advanced knowledge of the skills necessary to start, manage and administer community-based organizations, with emphasis on program development, financial management, social service provision and evaluation. It will offer insight into the challenges associated with data collection, client retention, program oversight and overall service delivery. It will also provide skills development training in the areas of resource development, program design and evaluation and interagency collaboration and cooperation.

The training will highlight the competencies and proficiencies necessary to identify qualified personnel, provide on-going professional development and establish and maintain human resource guidelines that stabilize and secure administrative operations.

Skills Objectives

By the end of this training series, participants will have learned and practiced the following skills and knowledge base:

- Key ingredients and best practice for program design and development
- Financial management principles and implementation tools
- Evaluation for quality enhancement tools
- Organizational and professional development basics

Duration

- Three full-day trainings (not back to back) that include demonstration projects
- A completion certificate will be issued by CNUS and an affiliate academic or government institution

4) Leadership Development

Description

This training will examine a variety of leadership principles and practice in professional settings. It will provide participants with a set of guidelines for how effective leadership moves organizations and individuals from current to future states, while actualizing endurance and sustainability. It requires participants to examine their own leadership styles and to determine whether they demonstrate an ability to model clear guidance and inspire productive motivation for people in their spheres of influence.

Skills Objectives

By the end of this training series, participants will have learned and practiced the following skills and knowledge base:

- Professionalism that is premised on leadership principles and ethical practice
- Key ingredients and practical steps to ethical, effective and efficient leadership
- Leadership skills for different settings, i.e., internal, interpersonal, organizational, public and political

Duration

- Three full-day trainings (inconsecutive) that include demonstration projects
- A completion certificate will be issued by CNUS and an affiliate academic or government institution

5) Training Skills

Description

From pedagogy to practice, this training will provide the essentials of workshop development, facilitation, coordination and evaluation tools.

This training will be used to develop a CV specific community education series workshop and training skills based on the elected topics by the CMs, which we will compile through in-person surveys.

Skills Objectives

By the end of this training series, participants will have learned and practiced the following skills and knowledge base:

- Active listening skills
- Workshop development skills
- Facilitation and training tools
- Communications and presentation skills/tools
- Evaluation tools

Duration

- Three full day trainings that include demonstration projects
- A completion certificate will be issued by CNUS and an affiliate academic or government institution

6) Crisis Management

Description

This training provides a set of practical skills and guidelines for developing a plan for responding to natural or manmade crisis that pose an immediate threat to life, liberty and property.

It will present participants with scenarios designed to exercise discipline, critical reasoning and leadership in crisis situations. There will be a primary focus on safety and emergency preparedness that will introduce participants to the rapid response protocols and resources of organizations like Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDCP).

In addition, the training will present opportunities for participants to grasp and understand some key principles of leadership and management and how they are applied in a variety of crisis situations that emerge during the course of CV work, related to behaviors and incidents that transpire with staff and/or CV clients.

The participants will also engage in the development of a comprehensive crisis management plan, walk through all its essential components and then engage in the assembly of a crisis management team.

Lastly, the participants will have an opportunity to explore scenarios in which they would be required to intervene using sound judgment and providing leadership that facilitates making difficult and decisive decisions, while commanding the support and cooperation of an array of people and organizations involved or who respond to the crisis at hand.

Skills Objectives

By the end of this training series, participants will have learned and practiced the following skills and knowledge base:

- Emergency Management
- Damage and Resource Assessment
- Crisis Management Techniques
- Crowd Control Strategies
- Leadership Skills Application
- Emergency Preparedness
- Accessing Government Resources
- Post-Crisis Review/Assessment

Duration

- Three full-day trainings that include demonstration projects
- A completion certificate will be issued by CNUS and an affiliate academic or government institution

The Center for NuLeadership on Urban Solutions is available to provide strategic consultation, facilitation and planning services related to CV training content or initiative development.

CONCLUSION

This assessment, while not a comprehensive analysis of the CV model, identifies salient opportunities to strengthen the CV program and address current challenges faced by the CV staff. It also demonstrates the synergistic alignment the program has with existing CNUS trainings to holistically support program participants and the broader communities engaged.

The CV program is now ready to develop into a more uniform, responsive and transparent model. By establishing early and crosscutting guidelines, administering agencies can increase parity cross sites, both in administration and budget allocations. Furthermore, there is an opportunity to capacitate the role of CMs and create for them viable, long-term career paths as they transition into other areas of the workforce.

The program's alignment with CNUS' training modules presents an opportunity to exceed the immediate needs identified by VIs and the CV staff, thus creating a more sustainable toolkit to ensure that community members engaged by the CV program become well-equipped to manage the broader set of social-economic barriers they face. This assessment suggests points from which to deepen the partnership between CNUS and the CV program to dismantle the workings of violence in our society.

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ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

The Center for NuLeadership on Urban Solutions (CNUS) is a Human Justice think tank working to shift the paradigm for public safety and justice from criminal justice to Human Justice. The Human Justice philosophy is created by uniting and integrating the foundational principles of international human rights on to a platform for facilitating human development theory, methods and practice:

Human Rights + Human Development = Human Justice©

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+ HUMAN DEVELOPMENT
= HUMAN JUSTICE.®**



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