



**Process Evaluation of Call-in Meetings  
Conducted in Maryland  
under Project Safe Neighborhoods**



**INSTITUTE FOR  
GOVERNMENTAL  
SERVICE AND RESEARCH**

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under Project Safe Neighborhoods

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## **Executive Summary**

Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) is a program to combat gun violence that is coordinated by U.S. Attorney's Offices throughout the country. The University of Maryland's Institute for Governmental Service and Research (IGSR) is the research partner to the U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Maryland, on PSN through grant PSNM-2013-0001, administered by the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention (GOCCP). One approach to implementing PSN nationally and in Maryland is the use of offender call-in meetings. High risk offenders are called in and notified of the consequences they could face, including federal prosecution, if they reoffend using a gun. In many jurisdictions, service providers attend the meetings to apprise offenders of programs available to help them succeed. Because there is only limited research concerning the effectiveness of call-in meetings, the U.S. Attorney's Office, GOCCP, and IGSR decided to focus research efforts on evaluating the Maryland call-in meetings.

This report contains the results of the process evaluation of call-in meetings in five Maryland jurisdictions: the City of Annapolis, Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City, the City of Frederick, and Prince George's County. Another report will be issued after an outcome evaluation of the meetings is completed.

A review of existing literature found evaluations that attributed reductions in crime to PSN programs incorporating call-in meetings as well as programs employing call-in meetings that pre-dated creation of PSN. However, studies that focus specifically on the effectiveness of call-in meetings have yielded mixed results. Call-in meetings in Chicago reduced recidivism and the seriousness of subsequent crimes committed by meeting participants. Call-in meetings in Indianapolis increased participants' awareness of law enforcement efforts, but did not result in lower recidivism rates among participants.

The meetings in Chicago and Indianapolis had similar formats. However, Chicago targeted the most violent offenders in the most crime-ridden neighborhoods, while Indianapolis invited a broader set of offenders to its meetings. Chicago also emphasized the legitimacy of law enforcement efforts to reduce violence. In Indianapolis, a failure of law enforcement to follow through with increased oversight and sanctions of targeted offenders may have weakened the meetings' effects.

In Maryland, PSN has been implemented in conjunction with two other programs, Maryland Exile and the Safe Streets initiative. Maryland Exile focuses on federal prosecution of the most violent repeat offenders. Safe Streets uses a set of criteria to identify offenders who will receive increased attention from law enforcement. Both programs utilize call-in meetings to communicate with their respective target group.

Through review of documents provided by PSN partners, interviews with meeting organizers, and observation of meetings, the IGSR researchers conducted a process evaluation of call-in meetings in Maryland. Offenders in the Violence Prevention Initiative (VPI) are the target population, with four of the five jurisdictions inviting the most violent VPI offenders to their call-in meetings. Anne Arundel County invites all VPI offenders and has call-in meetings with 80 to 100 offenders in attendance. The other jurisdictions typically limit meetings to 30 or 40 offenders. Targeting call-in meetings to the most violent offenders is consistent with the successful approach used in Chicago and in programs that led to creation of PSN.

As is the case nationally, the meetings in Maryland jurisdictions generally combine a deterrent message and a message of support. Representatives of the local police department, the U.S. Attorney's Office, and the State's Attorney's Office speak at the meetings in every jurisdiction. Offenders are told that they risk federal prosecution and harsh sanctions if they are rearrested for a violent crime. The emphasis is on deterrence, although all the jurisdictions except Annapolis invite service providers to the

meetings. The smaller jurisdictions provide offenders with personalized pamphlets describing the consequences of reoffending, given their individual criminal histories. The larger jurisdictions provide examples of offenders who have been prosecuted in the federal system. Meetings in Baltimore City have the broadest community involvement, including a member of the clergy, an ex-offender, and residents affected by violence. These participants help reinforce the anti-violence message and provide legitimacy to law enforcement efforts. The other Maryland jurisdictions should consider incorporating this feature into their call-in meetings.

Meeting organizers in some of the Maryland jurisdictions expressed concern over whether meeting participants that reoffend are actually receiving federal prosecution and harsher sanctions. They worry that their credibility will be harmed if this is not happening. Some meeting organizers would like to have more service providers at the meeting and more programs available to help offenders succeed.

The meeting organizers that were interviewed for the process evaluation generally believe that call-in meetings have contributed to reductions in violent crime. The extent to which this is the case will be addressed by the planned outcome evaluation.

A caveat regarding the findings and conclusions presented in this report is that they are based on interviews with a limited number of individuals in only four of the five jurisdictions and observations of call-in meetings in only four of the five jurisdictions. Key staff in Baltimore City departed the program before they could be interviewed, and the City of Annapolis did not conduct a call-in meeting during the timeframe of the process evaluation.

**Process Evaluation of Call-in Meetings Conducted in Maryland  
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## **Introduction**

Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) is a federal program to reduce gun violence that is coordinated by U.S. Attorney's Offices throughout the country. The program encourages collaboration between the agencies implementing PSN and researchers. The University of Maryland's Institute for Governmental Service and Research (IGSR) is the research partner to the U. S. Attorney's Office, District of Maryland, (USAO Maryland) on PSN through grant PSNM-2013-0001, administered by the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention (GOCCP).

PSN was created by the U.S. Department of Justice in 2001 to combat the problem of gun violence. The five main components of the program are partnerships, strategic planning, training, outreach, and accountability (U.S. Department of Justice, 2002). Incorporating these five components, jurisdictions can mold the program into what will be most effective to their specific neighborhoods. Offender call-in meetings are one of the approaches used by PSN programs nationally and in Maryland. High risk offenders are called in and notified of the consequences they could face if they reoffend using a gun. These potential consequences typically include federal prosecution, which is considered a deterrent because of the likelihood that offenders will be incarcerated far from their homes and the absence of parole. Available community-based resources are also generally presented at these meetings in an effort to help the offenders stay out of a criminal lifestyle. Each jurisdiction that holds these meetings follows its own format and guidelines on how to conduct the meetings.

There is only limited research showing that offender call-in meetings deter future gun violence. Therefore, in discussions among IGSR, the U.S. Attorney's Office, and GOCCP, it was decided that IGSR should focus its PSN research efforts on offender call-in meetings. This report contains background information on PSN and call-in meetings, including existing research findings and a process evaluation of

offender call-in meetings at five Maryland sites: City of Annapolis, Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City, City of Frederick, and Prince George's County. For the process evaluation, the researchers observed meetings and interviewed some of the key organizers to understand how each jurisdiction conducts its meetings, so as to compare and contrast the various methods employed.

## **Origins of Project Safe Neighborhoods**

Since reaching its peak in the 1990s, there has been a downward trend in gun violence and homicide rates in the United States. A homicide rate of 9.8 per 100,000 in 1991 dropped to 5.5 per 100,000 in 2000 as a result of new policing techniques and a focus on this problem (McGarrell, 2008). There was an average of approximately 24,000 homicides per year in the United States during the 1990s, while there were only about 15,000 in 2010 (McGarrell, et al., 2013). However, of the 16,238 homicides during 2011, approximately 11,000 (more than two-thirds) involved a firearm (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014). In addition during 2011, there were 414,562 non-fatal firearms incidents (National Institute of Justice, 2013). In recent years, there has been an increased focus by law enforcement on the use of firearms in serious violent crimes, as this impacts both the rate of violent crimes in the United States and the fear of violence (McGarrell, et al., 2013).

Two programs, Operation Ceasefire in Boston, Massachusetts, and Project Exile in Richmond, Virginia are frequently cited as the foundation for PSN. Operation Ceasefire was an attempt to reduce gun violence through sending a strong deterrence message and threatening prosecution to anyone in possession of firearms (McDevitt, Decker, Hipple & McGarrell, 2006). A "pulling every lever" approach was used in which all legal sanctions were employed in cases of violent crime (McGarrell et al., 2013). Operation Ceasefire concentrated on high crime areas, focusing on addressing a prominent crime problem in each problem area. As part of the initiative, gang members were brought to forums at which they were informed of heightened enforcement efforts and the consequences of continued violence.

(Kennedy, Braga & Piehl, 2001). After the implementation of Operation Ceasefire, the homicide rate in Boston declined over thirty percent (McGarrell et al., 2013). This decline showed promise for this problem-oriented approach to solving specific crime problems in neighborhoods and communities. Subsequently, the Department of Justice developed the Strategic Approaches to Community Safety Initiative (SACSI), which successfully applied the Operation Ceasefire approach in ten other U.S. cities (McGarrell et al., 2013).

Richmond's Project Exile combined increased federal prosecution of individuals with prior felony convictions for illegal gun possession with a public education campaign reinforcing anti-firearms messages (McGarrell et al., 2013). Raphael and Ludwig (2003) concluded that Project Exile did not reduce Richmond's gun homicide rate. Based on additional data and analysis, Rosenfeld, Fornango, and Baumer (2005) reached the opposite conclusion.

Building on these prior programs, PSN was designed to bring various agencies together to decrease the nation's rate of gun and violent crime (McGarrell, et al., 2013). The following summarizes descriptions of the five components of PSN provided by the U.S. Department of Justice (2002):

- *Partnership* brings together various agencies to establish a consistent and strong deterrence message to the targeted offenders.
- The *strategic plan* should incorporate three national priorities: increased prosecution of violent organizations, such as drug traffickers, violent street gangs, and violent robbery rings, using all available federal laws; stronger enforcement against illegal gun traffickers and corrupt federal firearms licensees; and an increased application of federal firearms regulations concerning persons prohibited from possessing firearms or using firearms in furtherance of illegal activities.

- *Training* on topics such as firearms identification, safety, federal and state firearms statutes, federal and state search and seizure laws, and firearms trafficking and tracing will improve law enforcement's ability to address gun crime more effectively.
- *Outreach* to the community and media is essential to raising public awareness among both law-abiding citizens and potential offenders.
- *Accountability* involves continuing review of efforts to reduce gun violence to ensure that resources are targeted strategically.

Other authors have elaborated on the importance of these components. Partnerships focus on joining law enforcement agencies with other government agencies, such as the U.S. Attorney's offices, as well as connecting criminal justice agencies with the community, especially community organizations aimed at helping offenders reenter society (McGarrell, et al., 2013). Community organizations participate in PSN to support the message being sent to the offenders. These organizations aid PSN through offering their own view, posting public fliers stating the reasoning for this program and the severity of it, and providing assistance to the offenders in ways such as job opportunities (McDevitt, Braga, & Cronin, 2007).

The strategic planning component of PSN encourages jurisdictions to tailor approaches to their individual settings and problems (McGarrell, 2013). The focus is on groups committing violence in the community. Specific deterrence provides the target group with a very explicit message, explaining the exact response law enforcement will have if the offenders commit certain types of behavior (Dalton, 2002).

Papachristos, Meares, and Fagan (2007); Papachristos, Wallace, Meares, and Fagan (2013); and Kennedy (2010) emphasize that law enforcement must establish legitimacy in order for the offenders' views on violence, and the consequences of violence, to be altered. According to Tyler (1997, 2006),

people obey the law if they feel that those making the rules are legitimate and the rules will be applied fairly. Legitimacy is enhanced by improving the “tone and quality of law enforcement interactions with offenders” (Papachristos et al., 2013, p. 2). If law enforcement does not obtain legitimacy in the eyes of the offender, offenders will not heed their warnings, and instead will continue to commit violence (Kennedy, 2010).

Citing case studies of individual PSN sites and their broad evaluation of PSN, McGarrell and colleagues (2013) reported generally favorable results. They noted that PSN-targeted cities employing research-based approaches, law enforcement and community partnerships, and an increase in federal prosecutions experienced significantly lower levels of violent crime than non-PSN cities. In addition, they found that PSN-targeted cities that used fewer of these approaches in their implementation of PSN were less effective than PSN communities who implemented more components of the intervention.

## **Call-in Meetings**

A number of the jurisdictions implementing PSN have utilized offender notification meetings, also known as call-in meetings, as an approach. McDevitt and colleagues (2006) trace the origins of these meetings to Operation Ceasefire and describe their purpose as two-fold: (1) sending a specific deterrence message to high-risk individuals that gun violence will not be tolerated and (2) communicating that local programs are willing to provide them with services that can help these individuals succeed. According to McDevitt and colleagues, these meetings also promise a coordinated and aggressive law enforcement response to firearms violence. The meetings alert offenders that they cannot act with impunity because they are visible to the police and the community, and they communicate the deterrence message to individuals not yet involved in violence but thought to be “on the verge” (McDevitt et al., 2006, p. 4).

McDevitt and colleagues (2006) identify two primary groups, law enforcement and service providers, that are common participants in offender notification meetings and a third group, “those who

have had to live with the after-effects of gun violence,” that participates in some communities. The participants generally include local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies, as well as both the U.S. and State’s Attorney’s offices, and various community organizations (McDevitt et al., 2006). Other agencies, such as Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco , Firearms and Explosives (ATF), and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), typically have some representation at these meetings, as well (McDevitt et al., 2006).

McDevitt and colleagues (2006) outline the following process for conducting call-in meetings:

- 1) Identify the target population (high-risk offenders within a geographic area)
- 2) Develop a list of individuals
- 3) Determine how to bring these individuals in
- 4) Deliver the message (threat, offer of assistance)

For a successful meeting, there must be partnerships, specific deterrence, and community involvement (McDevitt et al., 2006). Although offender call-in meetings vary by jurisdiction, they often follow the same format. Offenders are brought in for a short meeting in which law enforcement, community organizations, and service providers all come together to speak to these offenders to discuss what the future may hold for them. The meetings are typically held in neutral locations, such as community center, to ensure that the offenders feel comfortable and not as though they are in custody (Papachristos et al., 2013). Law enforcement officials inform the offenders that they will be monitored closely and, should they reoffend, their punishment will be very harsh, following the concept of “pulling every available ‘lever’” (Papachristos et al., 2013). They also inform the offenders of their focus on increasing federal prosecutions, an approach designed to incapacitate reoffenders and deter others. After law enforcement officials speak, the participating community organizations provide the offenders with information on what they have to offer them and how they can help the offenders (McDevitt et al., 2006). The messages conveyed must not only be legitimate, but also reasonable, in order for the

offenders to take the warnings seriously and to consider complying with them (Papachristos et al., 2013). The participation of community members in the meeting, including residents affected by violence and ex-offenders as well as service providers, helps reach the offenders. Through the deterrence message and then the offer of support from community organizations, these meetings attempt to change the offenders' views of the criminal justice system with the hope that they will take potential punishments more seriously and abide by the law (Papachristos et al., 2013).

## Evaluations of Call-in Meetings

Evaluations of PSN have been conducted in the following jurisdictions in which offender notification meetings were one of the approaches implemented:

- Lowell, Massachusetts (McDevitt et al., 2007) used targeted deterrence through offender notification meetings and home visits; local-federal coordination of prosecution decisions to maximize incapacitation; and outreach to adults in the Asian community to influence youth to stop gang violence. Researchers examined gun crimes before and after PSN implementation (pre-post) and included other cities as comparisons and found a reduction in gun assaults.
- The Middle District of North Carolina used similar approaches to those used in Lowell, Massachusetts, including offender notification meetings in three large cities and one small city. Evaluators found that total gun crime declined following implementation of PSN. Time series analysis showed statistically significant reductions in the three large PSN cities, but not in the one small PSN city (Hipple, Frabutt, Corsaro, & McGarrell, 2007).
- In Chicago, PSN involved increased federal prosecutions for those carrying or using guns, longer sentences for these federal prosecutions, supply-side firearm policing and gun seizures, and offender call-in meetings. These approaches resulted in a 35 percent decline in

homicide rates in the PSN neighborhoods, with the largest effect attributed to offender call-in meetings (Papachristos et al., 2007).

The above evaluations of PSN and evaluations of Boston's Operation Ceasefire and related programs assess the effectiveness of comprehensive approaches in which call-in meetings were one component of the intervention. A review of the literature also found evaluations that focus specifically on the effectiveness of call-in meetings. The results of these evaluations are mixed. Three applications of call-in meetings in Indianapolis had little or no effect on recidivism (McGarrell & Chermak, 2003; McGarrell, Hipple & Banks, 2003; Chermak, 2006), whereas call-in meetings in Chicago were effective (Papachristos, 2013). The three Indianapolis interventions and the Chicago intervention are described below.

### **Indianapolis Call-in Meetings**

The first Indianapolis intervention involving call-in meetings was implemented in 1998 and evaluated by McGarrell and Chermak (2003). These "lever-pulling meetings," combined focused deterrence and linkage to opportunities. Each meeting was attended by 20 to 30 probationers and parolees, selected because of current or prior involvement in firearms crime and/or drug offenses. Meetings typically lasted 45 minutes to an hour and included presentations by a community representative, police official, assistant U.S. Attorney, county prosecutor, parole or probation officer, and service provider. Often, handouts about a recent homicide victim, individuals prosecuted, and resource information were provided to attendees. About one meeting per month was held over a two-year period. According to McGarrell and Chermak, three types of meetings occurred. The most common was a general meeting that covered both the anti-violence message and the availability of services. The second type of meeting was focused on a positive message and included attendees to prior meetings that had remained out of trouble. The third type of meeting focused on offenders' continued involvement in violence. Participants of this last type of meeting were subject to drug testing. The lever-

pulling meetings evolved over time. They were moved from a courtroom downtown to community locations; the script was changed to focus more on opportunities; and a follow-up letter was sent to attendees reminding them of available services.

Another component of the 1998 lever-pulling approach in Indianapolis was a multi-agency response to homicide incidents that appeared to involve groups of known chronic offenders, drug markets, and high crime locations (McGarrell & Chermak, 2003). The planned response included directed police patrol, probation and parole home visits, nuisance abatement enforcement, drug market crackdowns, and service of outstanding warrants. According to McGarrell and Chermak, however, the multi-agency response occurred in only a small portion of gang- and drug-related homicide incidents.

McGarrell and Chermak (2003) compared the attitudes and behavior of lever-pulling meeting attendees with a control group of offenders on probation or parole for similar offenses. They found that offenders attending the lever-pulling meetings were more familiar than control group members with the strategies being used in Indianapolis to combat homicide and were more likely to believe the strategies were effective. However, meeting attendees were not less likely to recidivate than were control group members (Chermak & McGarrell, 2004).

McGarrell, Hipple, and Banks (2003) studied a second Indianapolis intervention involving call-in meetings. This was a reentry intervention for offenders returning from prison to three high-crime police districts during 2000 and 2001. The intervention was conducted as a quasi-experiment, with the meetings rotated across the three districts. For each meeting, a treatment group of recently released offenders was selected in one of the three districts and a comparison group of offenders released during the same time period was selected in one of the other two districts.<sup>1</sup> Treatment group offenders were sent a letter informing them of a meeting and ordered to attend by their parole or probation officers. Comparison group members were not invited to and did not attend a call-in meeting.

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<sup>1</sup> It appears that only residence within the geographic area, and not the criminal history of the offender, was the selection criterion.

The meetings attended by treatment group members included law enforcement officials, service providers, and community leaders. Either the coordinator of the Indianapolis Violence Reduction Project or the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Indiana opened the meeting. The next speaker was typically someone from the neighborhood, followed by representatives from the police department, local and federal prosecution, and probation or parole, all of whom conveyed a deterrence message. A community representative, often a former offender who had changed course, spoke about working to reduce violence in the neighborhood. The meeting concluded with brief presentations by service providers, including training, job placement, and substance abuse treatment programs. Many offenders stayed to talk with service providers.

The outcome evaluation of the reentry intervention found no significant difference between the treatment and comparison groups in rearrest rates, length of time before reoffending, or likelihood that a new arrest was for an offense against persons (McGarrell et al., 2003). McGarrell and colleagues explained the lack of apparent impact was likely due to the low-dosage characteristic of the one-hour meetings and the small number of offenders (approximately 100) receiving the intervention, which provided low statistical power for detecting differences between the treatment and comparison groups.

Chermak (2006) used an experimental design to evaluate a third intervention in which call-in meetings were used as part of the lever-pulling strategy in Indianapolis. In 2002, felony probationers convicted of certain violent, gun, drug, or property offenses were assigned to one of two types of call-in meetings (law enforcement focused or community leader focused) or to a control group that received regular probation. Nearly three-quarters of the offenders were on probation for drug offenses or property crimes; just over one-quarter of the offenders were on probation for violent crimes or weapons charges. The law enforcement focused meeting was held at the courthouse with 20 to 30 probationers and an equal number of law enforcement and community representatives present. Law enforcement officials talked about how they would respond to future crime by the probationers. The

community representatives and some law enforcement officials discussed programs available to help the probationers. The community leader focused meeting was held at a community center and featured three to five well known community leaders who spoke about their concern for violence in the community, programs to help the probationers, and faith-based services.

According to Chermak (2006, p. 154), probationers that attended the law enforcement focused meeting left “stunned and/or angry,” while the probationers who attended the community leader focused meeting had “good attitudes.” Through interviews of offenders, Chermak (2006) found that the law enforcement focused meetings were an effective means of changing offenders’ perceptions of the risk of being sanctioned and communicating that law enforcement officials want offenders to make good choices. The offending behavior of probationers that attended either type of meeting was no different than the behavior of the probationers in the control group, but probationers that attended the law enforcement focused meetings were more likely to recidivate downward (i.e., commit a less serious crime). There was no difference in commission of technical violations by probationers across the treatment and control groups. The probationers assigned to either type of call-in meeting were significantly more likely than control group probationers to contact community leaders seeking help in the post meeting period, but no more likely than control group probationers to take advantage of community programs. Treatment group probationers were less likely to miss meetings with their probation officers than were control group probationers.

Chermak (2006) attributed the weak results of the Indianapolis call-in meetings to a failure of officials to follow up on the messages of the meetings. Probation officers made the same number of contacts with treatment group and control group probationers after the meeting. Probationers that attended the law enforcement focused meeting were more likely to have violations of probation filed against them. But this group of probationers was also more likely to have charges dismissed when they reoffended than were probationers that attended community leader focused meetings or control group

probationers. Treatment group probationers were not sentenced more frequently and did not receive longer sentences than control group probationers. Treatment group probationers reported the same number of contacts by police officers, community leaders, clergy, and probation officers after the meeting as did control group probationers.

### **Chicago Call-in Meetings**

In contrast to the Indianapolis results, the evaluation by Papachristos and colleagues (2013) focusing on call-in meetings in Chicago found that meeting participants stayed out of prison longer than comparison groups of non-participants, were less likely to commit new offenses, and were less likely to commit new serious crimes.

According to Papachristos and colleagues (2013), offenders are selected to attend call-in meetings based on whether they (1) live in the targeted high crime neighborhoods, (2) have at least one gun-related or violent offense on their criminal record, and (3) were released from prison within the last 3 to 6 months. "Target communities" are selected based on which communities have the most offending and highest levels of violence. In an effort to produce an effect on these offenders, the tactic of selective targeting, in connection with the policy of active pursuit, is most strongly emphasized; this tactic has shown promising results in Chicago (Papachristos et al., 2007).

Every Chicago meeting follows the same general outline, beginning with a law enforcement message and concluding with the various community programs presenting to the offenders (Papachristos et al., 2013). Law enforcement officials begin by depicting the severity of the situation to the attendees, emphasizing the likelihood that these offenders will become victims if they fail to turn away from a violent lifestyle. Being firm in their message, the law enforcement officials also attempt to show the offenders respect, rather than condemn them, in an effort to not discourage them from listening to what they have to say. Next, an ex-offender who has taken part in the available community opportunities speaks to the group, explaining the reality of their situation. This part of the meeting

establishes a connection with the offenders, because the speaker has been in their position and understands them. An ex-offender speaking to current offenders provides a sense of legitimacy to the message being delivered, which gains the attention of the offenders and prevents the offenders from feeling attacked and as though they are already being punished.

Finally, representatives of community programs that offer jobs, training, and education address the offenders, presenting their services and emphasizing that offenders have the option to alter their current lifestyle (Papachristos et al., 2013). This portion of the meeting aims to demonstrate that the criminal justice system is not against them, but instead wants to help them by providing access to community resources. In observing these meetings, Papachristos and colleagues found that about half of the attendees remained after the meeting to speak with service providers and other members of the PSN team.

### **Comparison of Indianapolis and Chicago Call-in Meetings**

One apparent difference between the call-in meetings in Indianapolis and those in Chicago is the target population. The Chicago meetings targeted offenders with histories of violent crime or gun-related offenses, whereas a broader set of offenders was invited to the Indianapolis meetings. Another possible difference is the perception of legitimacy of law enforcement engendered by the meetings. In Chicago, an objective of meeting organizers was to instill in participants a sense of procedural justice and the legitimacy of law enforcement. It is not known whether meeting organizers in Indianapolis viewed this as an important objective. The description of offenders as “stunned and/or angry” when leaving the law enforcement focused meeting in one Indianapolis intervention (Chermak, 2006, p. 154) suggests that these call-in meetings did not convey the legitimacy and reasonableness of law enforcement to participants.

## **Project Safe Neighborhoods in Maryland**

The USAO Maryland has implemented PSN in conjunction with two programs, Maryland EXILE and Project Safe Streets (USAO Maryland, n.d.-a). PSN task forces that meet monthly and receive state and federal grant funds to combat violent crime have been created in Baltimore City; Prince George's, Wicomico and Harford Counties; and the municipalities of Annapolis, Cumberland, Frederick, and Hagerstown.

## **Maryland Exile**

The Maryland Exile program, a state initiative based on the goals of PSN, aims to decrease gun and violent crimes. Based on the model first utilized in Richmond, Virginia, the Maryland Exile program focuses on a targeted population, utilizing the deterrent force of increased federal prosecutions to produce a reduction in gun and violent crime rates. There is a focus on more severe and legitimate punishments, including limited good time, no possibility of parole or probation, and no suspended sentences, to deter gun and violent offenders (Wyckoff, Kesselman, & Hess, 2014). A major element of this strategy is the use of proactive policing, as opposed to reactive policing, in order to prevent crimes. The widely advertised message of this program is that any felon carrying a gun will receive jail time, which sends a zero tolerance policy view to offenders and the community (USAO Maryland, n.d.-b). Currently, Maryland Exile strategies have been implemented in all the PSN jurisdictions.

The goal of Baltimore City's Exile program is to decrease violence by concentrating on the most violent offenders and communities (Baltimore Exile, 2006). An emphasis is placed on Violent Repeat Offenders identified by a team comprising representatives of the Division of Parole and Probation of the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services (DPSCS), the United States Probation Office, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the High Intensity Drug-Trafficking Area Task Force, the FBI, ICE, ATF, Baltimore Police, the Baltimore State's Attorney's Office, and the USAO, Maryland District (USAO Maryland, 2009). Individuals who belong to violent gangs or organizations operating in Baltimore

and individuals who have been charged with, or have been suspects in, shootings and murders are targeted. These include individuals with pending state gun, drug, or violent crime cases as well as others with no pending charges but lengthy criminal histories. Many are in violation of their parole or probation (USAO Maryland, 2009).

This program focuses on the role of gangs in gun violence; there is an emphasis on dismantling gangs by prosecuting gang members who commit gun crimes or order other members to take part in gun crimes (Baltimore Exile, 2006). The agencies try to ensure that these cases result in successful prosecutions, so as to maintain the credibility of their message. Law enforcement officers are trained specifically on the issues that can occur in firearms cases, such as identifying firearms and understanding the legal problems one may encounter in the prosecution of firearms, to maximize chances of successfully prosecuting the firearm carrier (Baltimore Exile, 2006).

Baltimore employs both a direct message, through offender call-in meetings, and a public message, through various billboards and signs, to guarantee that the offenders understand the consequences they will undoubtedly face if they commit another gun crime (Baltimore Exile, 2006). In addition to the joint effort of participating agencies, Baltimore's strategy utilizes community involvement. This model follows the general recommendations of PSN and its goals, while also tailoring these recommendations to the issues of Baltimore.

Prince George's County also participates in Maryland Exile, modifying the program to address the varying issues in its communities. For example, the initial focus of Maryland Exile in Prince George's County was armed carjackings, which were a major problem for this jurisdiction (Prince George's Exile, 2006). Similar to the Baltimore model, Prince George's County's strategy includes closely monitoring the most violent offenders in the community (Prince George's Exile, 2006). Law enforcement officials actively seek federal prosecution of these offenders if they commit another gun or violent crime. As in Baltimore City, the Prince George's County State's Attorney's Office works with local, state, and federal

law enforcement to increase attention on targeted offenders, as well as to support the message being sent to the offenders (USAO Maryland, n.d.-b).

## Safe Streets

This Maryland initiative, begun in 2008, is based on a multi-agency approach called a Security Integration Model, which aims to decrease all drug, gun, and other major crimes throughout Maryland through a more effective system of tracking offenders (GOOCP, 2014). The first site for this program was the City of Annapolis. Safe Streets has also been implemented in the cities of Cumberland, Frederick, Hagerstown, and Salisbury, as well as in Harford County, Cecil County, and Dorchester County (GOOCP, 2014). For this program, the agencies utilize a list of criteria that provides a point system for identifying and prioritizing offenders that will be watched and pursued (Wyckoff et al., 2014). The point system used in Cumberland is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Cumberland Safe Streets Criteria\***

Category	Score
Felony Conviction	2 points per
Misdemeanor Conviction	1 point per
Crimes of Violence	+1 point per
Controlled Dangerous Substance Arrest	+1 point per
Active Warrants	3 points per
Current Pre-trial Release Felony	5 points per
Current Pre-trial Release Misdemeanor	2 points per
Currently on Supervised Probation	2 points per
Currently on Unsupervised Probation	1 point per
Current Violence Prevention Initiative <sup>2</sup> Probation	5 points per
Field Contacts	½ point per
Gang Member	4 points per

\*Source: Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention

Safe Streets and Maryland Exile have many similarities. They both train patrol officers involved in the program to increase their attention to firearms on the streets. Also, both programs track priority

<sup>2</sup> See discussion of Violence Prevention Initiative in next section.

offenders during and after prosecution, to determine the results and any effects of either program.

GOCCP has studied the original locations where Safe Streets was employed, Annapolis City and Salisbury, and found large reductions in the level of violent crime (GOCCP, 2014). In Annapolis specifically, between 2007, the year before Safe Streets was implemented, and 2013, Annapolis experienced a 60.5 percent decrease in violent crimes (GOCCP, 2014).<sup>3</sup>

### **Violence Prevention Initiative**

A major aspect of Project Safe Neighborhoods, Maryland Exile, and the Safe Streets initiative is offender call-in meetings. Typically in Maryland, many of the offenders brought into the call-in meetings are part of the Violence Prevention Initiative (VPI). VPI is an intensive community supervision program that uses a risk assessment tool to identify those offenders who are most at risk for committing future violent crime (GOCCP, 2013).

In 2007, when VPI began, parolees or probationers would be included in VPI if they were under the age of 30 and had seven or more prior arrests and their current offense was for felony drugs, felony assault, armed robbery, possession of a handgun, carjacking, kidnapping, murder, or attempted murder (GOCCP, 2013). In 2009, the following criteria were added: history and number of juvenile criminal complaints, age at first arrest, involvement of a weapon in a prior arrest, and total number of adult and juvenile arrests (GOCCP, 2013). Once VPI offenders are identified, the offenders' community supervision agents and community supervision agents embedded in police departments track the offenders' involvement in violent incidents and work with the State's Attorney's Office to respond immediately to any incidents.

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<sup>3</sup> No comparison was done of this decline and the decrease in violent crime experienced by other jurisdictions over that period.

## Evaluation Methods

The evaluation of offender call-in meetings in Maryland is a two-step process. The first part of the evaluation, described in this report, is a process evaluation that documents how each jurisdiction conducts their offender call-in meetings, how the conduct of the meetings relates to the goals of that jurisdiction, and how the meetings relate to the components of PSN. A companion report describes an outcome evaluation assessing whether offender call-in meetings, as a part of PSN, have an impact on gun and violent crime rates and recidivism rates of offenders who attend the meetings.

## Research Questions

For the process evaluation, researchers focused on five key areas involved in the preparation, execution, and follow-up of offender call-in meetings: organization of call-in meetings, collaboration, call-in meetings attendees, staff preparedness and perceptions, and measuring success. The research questions for the process evaluation are as follows:

1. Organization of call-in meetings
  - a. How are offender call-in meetings organized?
  - b. What resources are devoted to offender call-in meetings?
  - c. How much time is spent preparing for these meetings by the different entities involved?
2. Collaboration
  - a. Do different agencies collaborate and are they satisfied with this collaboration?
  - b. What is the nature and extent of collaboration with law enforcement agencies?
  - c. What is the nature and extent of collaboration with community groups and community-based services?
3. Call-in meeting attendees
  - a. How many offenders typically attend these meetings?
  - b. Do offender call-in meetings focus on specific offenders?
  - c. How do offenders who attend call-in meetings differ from other offenders?
  - d. Are meetings focused on offenders in specific geographic areas?
4. Staff preparation and perceptions
  - a. What are staff perceptions of the effectiveness of the offender call-in meetings, as compared to other approaches?
  - b. How are the offender call-in meetings integrated into the workload of involved individuals?
  - c. Have staff had training regarding offender call-in meetings?

- d. What are staff views in regard to offender call-in meetings, as related to gun violence and violent crimes?
5. Measuring success
    - a. How do the different entities involved in the call-in meetings view the meetings?
    - b. Are the different entities involved in the call-in meetings satisfied with these meetings?
    - c. Are there specific measures captured by different agencies to evaluate the success of offender call-in meetings?
    - d. Are there specific measures captured by individual staff or supervisors to track individuals who attend the offender call-in meetings?
    - e. Do staff have ideas on how to measure the success of offender call-in meetings?

Two main methods were employed to document the offender call-in meetings: in-depth interviews and observations of call-in meetings. At a minimum either an interview or an observation were conducted in each jurisdiction. In three jurisdictions (Anne Arundel County, City of Frederick, and Prince George's County), both interviews and observations were conducted. The researchers also obtained data from the U.S. Attorney's Office on agency participation and offender attendance at call-in meetings during 2009 through 2014.

### **In-Depth Interviews**

The researchers interviewed law enforcement partners responsible for organizing and running the call-in meetings. A total of eight individuals from four jurisdictions (Annapolis, Anne Arundel County, Frederick, and Prince George's County) were interviewed. (The researchers were unable to conduct interviews in Baltimore City because key officials departed the Baltimore City program in 2014.) The interviews were conducted via phone at the convenience of the participants. The researchers began with a list of potential respondents provided by the U.S. Attorney's Office. Interviewees also offered suggestions for other appropriate staff members to be interviewed. The participants were all key organizers, who had knowledge of how the process works, and could comment on what works well and the areas in need of improvement.

At the beginning of each interview, the researchers inquired about the participant's individual job and respective role in these meetings and their perception of the meeting's goals. Then, researchers

asked about the planning of offender call-in meetings, with a focus on the communication and partnerships employed by the interviewee in the planning of these meetings. Thereafter, the researchers asked specific questions regarding the outline of the meetings, who takes part in the meetings, and the key aspects of the call-in meeting in their jurisdiction. To conclude, each interviewee was asked about their personal views on the strengths and weaknesses of their jurisdiction's meetings, and their overall opinion of the offender call-in meetings. The specific questions can be found in the interview instrument in the Appendix to this report.

## Observations

To enhance the information gained from the in-depth interviews, the researchers also observed offender call-in meetings. Observations were conducted in four jurisdictions: Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City, Frederick, and Prince George's County. (The City of Annapolis did not conduct any call-in meetings during the timeframe of the process evaluation.) These observations provided first-hand data on how many offenders attend, who makes presentations, and whether or not community partners are present to offer resources to the offenders. Additionally, researchers were able to observe the overall tone of the meeting. Meeting organizers were given little advanced notice that the researchers would attend. Nonetheless, it is possible that the researchers' presence affected how the meeting proceeded.

## Findings

Call-in meetings in the Maryland jurisdictions reviewed in this study commonly focus on offenders that are part of the Violence Prevention Initiative (VPI). The typical partners in organizing the meetings are the local police department; the U.S. Attorney's Office, Maryland District; the State's Attorney's Office for the jurisdiction in which the meeting is held; and the DPSCS Community Supervision office, which houses parole and probation agents for that jurisdiction. Characteristics of the meetings are described below for each jurisdiction, followed by a summary identifying similarities and differences.

## City of Annapolis

Although Annapolis is located within Anne Arundel County, the City of Annapolis has its own police force and a substantial portion of the county's VPI offender population, so from time to time, they conduct separate call-in meetings. The main goal of the meetings in the City of Annapolis, as stated by a meeting organizer, is giving a "final warning to the offenders that if they offend again they could possibly be prosecuted federally." They do not have any community involvement at their meetings, "because for them, it's not like a social services type forum, it is more of a stern warning type forum." The meeting reinforces the accountability provided by the frequent face-to-face contact with community supervision required of VPI offenders. The meetings occur approximately every eighteen months. According to meeting organizers, about 10 of the most violent VPI offenders are invited to each Annapolis call-in meeting.<sup>4</sup>

Each of the meetings in Annapolis follows the same general format. As offenders enter the meeting location, they receive a personalized pamphlet regarding their offense history and possible future consequences. "The agent actually gives them a paper that the U.S. Attorney's Office has put together that tells them if they reoffend how much time they would be looking at doing in federal time." The pamphlet states the possible punishment they could receive should they commit another offense. The first speaker at the meeting is the Annapolis Chief of Police. Next, representatives of the U.S. Attorney's Office and Anne Arundel State's Attorney's Office speak. A representative of DPSCS Community Supervision concludes by telling the offenders what their office is going to do should the offenders violate any of their conditions.

From the view of the law enforcement agencies involved, the personalized pamphlets given to the offenders are the main strength of these meetings and may have the greatest effect on the offenders. Overall, as described by one of the organizers, the meetings provide a "reality check for the

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<sup>4</sup> Data from the U.S. Attorney, Maryland District, covering 2009 through 2013 indicate a meeting size of 21 to 35 in Annapolis.

offender.” Meeting organizers note, however, that the offenders are not always federally prosecuted even though they are threatened that this will unquestionably happen should they reoffend, which brings the legitimacy of their message into question. A main leader at the meeting describes organizers main qualm as “the threat of federal prosecution that’s not followed through.”

Annapolis meeting organizers keep track of the offenders that have attended past call-in meetings. They report that recidivism levels among this group are low and that, with the exception of one homicide, new crimes committed by these offenders have been minor.

### **Anne Arundel County**

The agencies involved with offender call-in meetings in Anne Arundel County focus on explaining that law enforcement agencies are cooperating to achieve convictions and warning the offenders about what will happen to them if they continue to commit crimes. A main goal of the meeting is to make the offenders aware of the communication among the various agencies, including law enforcement, Community Supervision, the State’s Attorney’s Office, and the U.S. Attorney’s Office.

A key leader in these meetings mentioned that they have:

...actually heard people leaving talking about the fact that they didn’t realize that all of us communicate together like this and actually seeing us all in the same spot and on the same page, I think that sends a very strong message to any of the offenders that are there so I think that’s very helpful from that aspect.

Each of Anne Arundel County’s meetings follows the same general format. A county police official leads the meeting and introduces each speaker. The county Police Chief begins by discussing the partnerships among the agencies present and how they will use those partnerships to monitor and, if necessary, prosecute the offenders. He explains that they will pursue the longest sentence possible, which may include federal prosecution, should they reoffend. Then a command staff member from the Annapolis Police Department reinforces the idea of partnerships. Next, a member of federal law enforcement addresses the offenders, explaining that they will give out federal charges if need be, but it

is not something they want to do. Then, a representative from the U.S. Attorney's Office (usually an Assistant U.S. Attorney) speaks, offering a federal perspective and explaining the information sharing that occurs between their office and various other departments involved, including the police and community supervision. After the U.S. Attorney's Office, a representative from the Anne Arundel State's Attorney's Office (usually an Assistant State's Attorney) speaks to provide the local prosecutor's perspective. They explain the type of sentencing the offenders will receive if they commit another crime and reiterate that they will find ways to prosecute them federally. They urge the offenders to listen to all of the information being shared with them. Next, someone from Community Supervision speaks to explain their zero tolerance policy in terms of violations of parole or probation, their ability to process expedited warrant requests, and their close relationship with law enforcement. Finally, representatives from community organizations speak about available services. Offenders are invited to speak with representatives of these organizations after the meeting.

For most of the speakers, the goal is to inform the offenders of how aggressively these agencies can pursue them, due to the shared information and resources among the various agencies. One of the main organizers describes how they explain this to the offenders in attendance:

We [law enforcement] are going to tell the State's Attorney...if you violate we are going to ask for every bit of your back up time. If you get a new charge for guns, we are going to call the feds and we are going to tell them and ask them if they are going to take your case.

These meetings occur once per year, over a span of two days. Every offender called into an Anne Arundel County meeting is in the VPI program. Due to the large number of offenders called in, Anne Arundel County splits the attendance over two days. Law enforcement works to ensure that offenders from rival gangs do not attend meetings together.

Although service providers are present, according to a main organizer:

The focus isn't resources; that's not my focus. We can do referrals in the office. In our office we can refer them for substance abuse, treatment, workforce

development. We will bring them there to the meeting, but our main focus is to tell them what we are going to do.

Another organizer, though, noted that the purpose of the meeting is to help the offenders, rather than to threaten or punish them. That organizer stated:

We're not out to violate people's rights but we are out to give them the tools to succeed and if they decide that they are going to fail, then we give them the tools to re-incarcerate them and if there's enough time that they come back out, hopefully they will make some positive changes to their life.

To give their deterrence message credibility, several of the speakers describe real punishments received by past offenders, who had been in the position of the offenders in attendance. The law enforcement agencies involved are confident that the improved communication and the strong relationships among them have allowed them to create an effective deterrence message for these offenders. A key organizer stated, "As far as actual crime numbers go I think that the aggressive partnerships that we have with Community Supervision, the police department, our federal [and] state prosecutors, I personally think that those have a huge impact on them."

## Baltimore City

Call-in meetings in Baltimore City are held quarterly, with a small number of offenders invited to each meeting. The target population is the most violent VPI offenders from West Baltimore. Overall, the goal in Baltimore City is to warn the offenders of punishments they could face, while also attempting to help them stay away from a criminal lifestyle through the provision of community resources. Many community organizations come to speak with the offenders, with a focus on drug treatment and recovery programs, as well as job services. A local pastor attends as well, providing a religious and cultural view to the offenders. Also, case studies on offenders involved in violence and the consequences they now face as a result of that violence are presented to the offenders in an effort to provide them with a stronger deterrence message.

To begin the meeting, a local pastor addresses the offenders to offer a community perspective of violence in Baltimore. Then the Mayor, if present, speaks to the offenders, followed by the Police Commissioner, if present. Next, the commander of the Baltimore Police Department's Western District explains to the offenders that law enforcement agencies are changing how they handle offenders that continue to commit crimes and, if necessary, the police will come after them. Representatives of the U.S. and State's Attorney's Offices tell the offenders that if they commit a crime, law enforcement officials will use all available resources to solve it. However, they also emphasize that they do not want to have to do that. Then, service providers and representatives of community organizations speak. These include a representative of the Mayor's Office of Human Services and an ex-felon, who addresses the offenders to demonstrate that they can turn their lives around and let them know there are services that can help them do so. Representatives of Mothers of Murdered Sons and Daughters address the offenders to provide the perspective of families that have been affected by violent crime.

The meetings in Baltimore City follow a very strict format that specifies how much time each speaker has to address the offenders, so that the meeting is exactly an hour. The organizers also provide pizza for the offenders afterward to encourage them to stay to talk to the community organizations and the law enforcement officials.

### **City of Frederick**

As described by a key organizer of the call-in meetings in Frederick, the aim is to give the offenders a "wakeup call" by depicting the road they are headed down and what this could mean to them and their life. Both law enforcement and community organizations participate in these meetings. Meetings in Frederick occur once per year, and are attended by a small number of VPI offenders (15 to 20) as well as a few other offenders viewed by law enforcement officials as being on the verge of serious criminal involvement. The offenders at these meetings receive personalized pamphlets prepared by the U.S. Attorney's Office with the consequences they face if they reoffend.

The State's Attorney's Office plays the lead role in call-in meetings in Frederick. In 2014, the meeting began with the Frederick City Chief of Police speaking to the offenders, followed by the State's Attorney's Office, a representative from Community Supervision, and a representative of the U.S. Attorney's Office. Their remarks emphasized federal prosecution and the differences between the state and federal systems. At these meetings law enforcement officials answer any questions the offenders may have. While they did not make presentations, United Way and the Frederick County Health Department had exhibits, and representatives spoke to offenders about their services after the meeting.

The main strength of these meetings, as described by members of participating law enforcement agencies, is the personal pamphlets, which is their most powerful and effective tool. The effect of these pamphlets was described as follows:

When they look at that pamphlet and see if I get picked up with a handgun I am getting 15 years, if I get picked up with drugs and a handgun I could get 30 to life, I think that starts to click with them, more than anything else, because they are actually seeing something that's got their name on it and this is what is going to happen to me if I do x, y, or z.

This aids in the strength of providing a "direct message in a professional manner" to the offenders. Another organizer pointed to the extensive experience of the presenters as a major strength of the meetings.

Some law enforcement participants believe the types of offenders present can affect the success of these meetings. One meeting organizer explained that:

Last year when I think they were a little bit more receptive, I think it was a little bit of an older crowd last year, so they really know what that kind of time means. You know a lot of them had already been to DOC, they already know what that's like, whereas I have to look at our list again, but I don't know if a lot of our guys that came this year had been to DOC before.

One criticism expressed regarding these meetings is that the offenders are not always automatically federally prosecuted if they reoffend, which is a promise made to offenders during the

meeting. Failure to carry through on the promise takes away from the credibility of the message the agencies give to the offenders at the meeting. A member of law enforcement explained:

I think if we are going to have these EXILE call-ins and really stress to these guys that if you get in trouble again, then we are going to look at you federally, then we need to follow through with that, where a lot of times that doesn't necessarily happen I don't think.

One meeting organizer reported that agencies, particularly Community Supervision, follow up with offenders after the meeting, but that offenders often do not avail themselves of services. The same organizer commented on the need for more and better services in the community. Another meeting organizer reported that law enforcement officials track meeting attendees through their law enforcement reporting system and are aware whenever one of these offenders comes in contact with police. Two of the meeting organizers suggested that call-in meetings should be held more frequently than once per year.

### **Prince George's County**

Run mainly by the police department, the Prince George's County meetings have the goal of convincing the offenders that the police know who they are and are watching them very closely. Participants are the most violent VPI offenders residing in six areas of the county with the highest levels of violent crime. The police let the offenders know that they monitor them very closely and will look at them first if crimes occur in the focus area. At least one meeting is held during the year for each of the targeted geographic areas.

At the onset, the law enforcement agencies make sure the offenders understand that they are not there to be locked up, but rather the police simply wish to speak to them and share some information with them. In order to do that, a law enforcement representative involved in the meetings explained that they:

...will go in and have a conversation with them, break the ice, tell them that the meeting is only going to take about an hour and we want to share some information

with them. And once we've gotten them kind of relaxed and they understand we aren't there to put handcuffs on them, then we will begin the meetings and try to make it as quick as possible and the most important information we can give to them.

To begin the meeting the Chief of Police or high level police official tells the offenders how the police are working with Community Supervision and explains that they want to help the offenders and show them resources that are available to them. Then Community Supervision speaks, followed by representatives of the U.S. and State's Attorney's Offices. A representative of the Department of Correction, Youth and Family Services Division speaks to the offenders, to show what assistance is available to them from the county. Finally, other government agencies (if present), such as the federal ATF, and community organizations, such as Adam's House, Maryland Hire, and Prince George's Community College, conclude the meeting. They address the offenders, presenting the specific services they provide and other available opportunities.

The main problem with this county's meetings, from the perspective of the police involved in the meeting, is that there is "not enough nonprofit support to provide jobs and resources to keep these people from being tempted to go out and reoffend." The law enforcement officials involved want more nonprofit support, especially in terms of jobs for the offenders, because the major issue they voice is being unable to find a job. The main organizers in the meetings at Prince George's County believe that they need more community involvement in their meetings so that they can more effectively help the offenders change the course of their lives.

Prince George's Police Department officials believe the meetings have been instrumental in getting word out to the community that the agency is serious about reducing crime, and have helped to drive the crime rate down in the past several years. The police have asked Community Supervision to track reoffending among meeting attendees and have been told that the recidivism rate is low.

## Summary of Maryland Call-in Meetings

The first Maryland call-in meetings were held in 2009. A total of 36 meetings involving more than 1,200 offenders had been held through 2014 by the five jurisdictions being studied (see Table 2).

**Table 2. Call-in Meetings in Maryland Jurisdictions (through 2014)\***

Jurisdiction	First Meeting	Number of Meetings (through 2014)	Number of Offenders Invited
City of Annapolis	September 22, 2009	3	87
Anne Arundel County	October 27, 2009	7	402
Baltimore City	May 1, 2013	3	100
City of Frederick	February 9, 2011	4	92
Prince George's County	September 9, 2009	19	553

\*Source: U.S. Attorney's Office, Maryland District

Overall, there are many similarities and a few differences across the jurisdictions in how the offender call-in meetings are conducted. Table 3 summarizes some of the key meeting features.

As noted above, offenders in the VPI program are the target population in each jurisdiction. Anne Arundel County invites all VPI offenders, while Baltimore City and Prince George's County focus on the most violent VPI offenders within certain geographic areas. Annapolis and Frederick select a subset of VPI offenders for each meeting. Frederick also includes some offenders that are not in the VPI program but are thought by law enforcement officials to be on the verge of joining that group. As all VPI offenders are called-in, Anne Arundel is the only jurisdiction that routinely holds large meetings. The other jurisdictions typically limit meetings to 30 or fewer offenders.

Each jurisdiction except the City of Annapolis invites service providers to the meetings. In Annapolis and Frederick, offenders are provided with pamphlets containing information on the consequences the offenders face if they reoffend, given their individual criminal histories. Meeting organizers in both jurisdictions cite the pamphlets as a major strength of the meetings. Frederick also provides offenders with information on how they qualify for the VPI program.

Table 3. Key Features of Call-in Meetings by Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	Key Features of Call-in Meetings				
	Target Population	Meeting Size	Meeting Frequency	Service Providers	Information Given
City of Annapolis	Selected VPI offenders	Small (10-35)	Every 18 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personalized pamphlet containing information on potential criminal justice consequences of future offenses</li> </ul>
Anne Arundel County	VPI offenders	Early meetings were small to medium (20-50); more recent meetings were large (85-90)	Once or twice per year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work force development</li> <li>Mental health</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information on potential criminal justice consequences of future offenses</li> <li>Examples of severe punishment received by repeat offenders</li> <li>Community resources</li> </ul>
Baltimore City	Most violent VPI offenders in West Baltimore	Small to medium (25-45)	Quarterly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clergy</li> <li>Job services</li> <li>Drug rehabilitation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Information on Project EXILE</li> <li>Examples of severe punishment received by repeat offenders</li> <li>Recovery and job services</li> </ul>
City of Frederick	Selected VPI and other offenders	Small (15-25)	Once per year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health</li> <li>Addiction counseling and treatment</li> <li>Job training</li> <li>Education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personalized pamphlet containing potential criminal justice consequences of future offenses</li> <li>Information about how they qualify for VPI</li> </ul>
Prince George's County	Most violent VPI offenders in 6 focus areas	Usually small (25-30), but one meeting with over 100	One per year per focus area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family services</li> <li>Nonprofit organizations (help with job interviews, food stamps, etc.)</li> <li>Community college</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brochures explaining federal system</li> <li>Housing and jobs information</li> <li>Community resources</li> </ul>

The larger jurisdictions (Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City, and Prince George's County) do not provide personalized information to offenders. Anne Arundel County and Baltimore City convey information on the possible consequences of reoffending through examples of offenders who have been prosecuted in the federal system. Anne Arundel emphasizes communication among law enforcement agencies and aggressive pursuit of reoffenders. Baltimore City is unique in having a member of the clergy, an ex-offender, and residents directly affected by violence provide their perspectives to the offenders. Prince George's County is the only jurisdiction in which the community college is represented at the call-in meeting.

Table 4 shows the agency representatives making presentations at call-in meetings and the order in which they present. Representatives of the local police department, the U.S. Attorney's Office, and the State's Attorney's Office speak at the meetings in every jurisdiction. In all jurisdictions except Baltimore City, the meeting is opened by the jurisdiction's police chief. In Baltimore City, a minister opens the meeting, followed by the Mayor and Police Commissioner (if present) and the commander of the police district in which the meeting is held. Baltimore City is the only jurisdiction in which no one from Community Supervision speaks. Service providers do not attend the Annapolis call-in meeting. While service providers attend the Frederick meeting, they do not address the offenders as a group.

Regarding meeting weaknesses, an organizer of Prince George's meetings identified participation from other community resources, particularly those offering employment assistance, as something that would enhance the value of the meetings. Having more frequent meetings and more resources in the community were identified as potential improvements in Frederick. Meeting organizers in both Annapolis and Frederick expressed concern that credibility is lost when the promise of federal prosecution is not carried out.

Table 4. Speakers at Call-in Meetings by Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	Speaking Order of Agency Representatives at Call-in Meetings						
	Police Chief/ Commissioner	U.S. Attorney's Office	State's Attorney's Office	DPSCS Community Supervision	Service Providers	Other	
City of Annapolis	1	2	3	4			
Anne Arundel County	1	4	5	6	7	2-Annapolis Police 3-federal law enforcement	
Baltimore City	3 (if present)	5	6		7	1-Minister 2-Mayor (if present) 4-Police District Commander 8-Ex-offender 9-Community organizations	
City of Frederick	1	4	2	3		Included if present: Sheriff, other local police, state police, federal law enforcement (e.g., FBI, ATF)	
Prince George's County	1	3	4	2	7	5-Dept. of Corrections, Youth and Family Services Division 6-ATF and/or other government agencies	

Meeting organizers in Annapolis, Anne Arundel County, and Prince George's County expressed their belief that the meetings are assisting in reducing crime. Based on information they have received from other agencies, the interviewees from Annapolis and Prince George's County reported that participants have low recidivism levels.

## Conclusions

PSN and predecessor programs, such as Boston's Ceasefire and Richmond's Exile, have been shown to reduce violent crime in cities across the country. Offender call-in meetings have been a component of many of these efforts. Studies that focus specifically on the effectiveness of call-in meetings have yielded mixed results, however. Call-in meetings in Chicago reduced recidivism and the seriousness of subsequent crimes committed by meeting participants. Call-in meetings in Indianapolis increased participants' awareness of law enforcement efforts, but did not result in lower recidivism rates among participants. Interestingly, the formats of the meetings in Chicago and Indianapolis are similar. A difference, that may have affected the outcomes, is that Chicago targeted its meetings at the most violent offenders in the most crime-ridden neighborhoods, while Indianapolis invited a broader set of offenders to its meetings. The Chicago meetings also emphasized the legitimacy of law enforcement efforts to reduce violence. In Indianapolis, a failure of law enforcement to follow up on promises of increased oversight and sanctions may have countered positive effects of the meetings.

The call-in meetings studied in Maryland generally follow the national model of combining a specific deterrent message to a target group with community support to help these offenders change their behavior. The focus in each of the Maryland jurisdictions appears to be the deterrence message, but service providers are present at the meetings in all jurisdictions except Annapolis. Meetings in Baltimore City have the broadest community involvement, including a member of the clergy, an ex-offender, and residents affected by violence. These participants help reinforce the anti-violence

message and, according to researchers, provide legitimacy to law enforcement efforts. The other Maryland jurisdictions should consider incorporating this feature into their meetings.

The Maryland call-in meetings target offenders in the VPI program, and in some Maryland jurisdictions, only the most violent of the VPI offenders are invited. In this way, call-in meetings in Maryland are similar to those in Chicago, which has shown success focusing on the most violent offenders, rather than those in Indianapolis, where meetings have a broader reach, but no significant effect on offender recidivism.

Generally, the deterrent message at the Maryland call-in meetings is that the partnership among law enforcement agencies will result in those who reoffend being caught and severely punished. That message loses credibility, however, if the promised oversight and harsh sanctions do not materialize, as may have happened in Indianapolis and was suggested as a possible problem by some of the Maryland meeting organizers. Some of the jurisdictions are tracking subsequent criminal activities by meeting participants and resulting prosecutions, but it does not appear that the information is shared routinely among call-in meeting partners. Doing so could reassure participating agencies of the credibility of their deterrent message and provide a better understanding of the effectiveness of the initiative.

Having more service providers present at the call-in meetings and having more resources available for offenders in the community are concerns for some meeting organizers. The presence of service providers at the meeting helps convey law enforcement officials' message that they want offenders to succeed. There is research evidence from Indianapolis that meeting participants seek out community resources introduced at the meetings, but there is also evidence that these participants fail to enroll in programs. So it is unclear whether adding resources to the Maryland meetings will affect recidivism.

The meeting organizers interviewed for the process evaluation generally believe that the call-in meetings have contributed to reductions in violent crime. The extent to which this is the case is addressed by outcome evaluation contained in a separate report.

A caveat regarding the findings and conclusions presented above is that they are based on interviews with a limited number of individuals in only four of the five jurisdictions and observations of call-in meetings in only four of the five jurisdictions. Key staff in Baltimore City departed the program before they could be interviewed, and the City of Annapolis did not conduct a call-in meeting during the timeframe of the process evaluation.

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## **Appendix: Interview Instrument**

## Offender Call-in Meeting In-Depth Interview Instrument

The following interview instrument will be used as a guide and the majority of questions are open ended. It is hoped that as the interview progresses the discussion may move to items that are of interest to the research but may have not been initially included as items in this instrument. In order to assure that the interview leads to the best information possible, we do not want to limit the discussion and information gathered to the exact questions in this instrument. For this reason many of the questions will remain open ended and broad, so that the respondent leads the answers instead of the instrument structure.

### Introduction:

Hello my name is (interviewer's name) and I am a researcher from the University of Maryland at College Park. I am one of a team of researchers who fulfills the role of research partners for Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN), a federally funded project with a goal to assist local law enforcement agencies and stakeholders in reducing gun violence in their jurisdictions. As part of our role as research partners for PSN, we are evaluating offender call-in meetings. We would like to interview you about your views of these meetings. I am going to ask you a number of questions about how the program began, your role in the program, your perception of the program's strengths and weaknesses, and how you think the program may be improved.

It is important to note that taking part in this interview is completely voluntary. If you choose to take part, you can refuse to answer any question or leave at any time. As well, when reporting on the information gained from this and other interviews we conduct we will not use your name and we will do our best to keep our findings general enough so that you may not be identified. However, the only way we can improve upon the current program and highlight best practices is to allow some specificity, for this reason there may be instances in our reporting where we use your agency name and/or your position. We can discuss this further if you feel uncomfortable in any way.

➤ Do we have your consent to continue?

Yes            No

I also want to make sure that I accurately capture all of the information you share. Would you mind if I record this interview? Please note that this recording will only be used for transcribing the interview, and after the transcription is complete, I will destroy the recording file/tape. Only the researchers involved in the study will have access to the recording file and transcription. The information gathered from this interview transcription will be used along with information gathered from other research participants. In order to protect your identity, any quotations taken from interview transcriptions would not be credited to any individual's name.

- Do we have your consent to record this interview?

Yes                      No

- Agency and Individual's Background

We would like to start by learning more about you and your agency...

1. Could you tell me about your position here at (agency name)?
  - a. What are your responsibilities here?
  - b. How long have you been with the agency?
  - c. How long have you been involved in offender call-in meetings?
  - d. Are the offender call-in meetings similar to any programs your agency was involved in in the past? Elaborate if so.
  
2. What are the goals of the offender call-in meetings?
  - a. How does your agency fit into these goals?
  - b. What are your agency's goals for this project?
  
3. Could you describe the offender call-in project as a whole?
  - a. What are the specific activities of these meetings?
  - b. Which agencies/individuals play key roles in the project?
  - c. Can you tell us your understanding of each of the partner agencies' roles in the project? (need to try to gather the policing, federal and local prosecution, and community side of the effort)
  - d. What are these agencies doing as part of this project?
    - i. Were they previously involved in any work with your agency?
  
4. Does the program reach out to the community (including schools, neighborhoods, crime victims, churches, families)?
  - a. If so, how?
  - a. How does this differ from what was being done previously?
  
5. Have you or your agency conducted or attended any type of training regarding offender call-in meetings?
  - a. Could you please describe who this training was for and the nature of the training?

➤ Describe Your Agency/Individual Role

1. How did your agency become involved in offender call-in meetings?
2. Who takes on the majority of work in regard to call-in meetings within your agency?
3. Has the program changed or improved work within the agency?
4. Has the program demanded more of your time or your agency's time?
  - a. Has the project resulted in a decrease in recidivism? Please explain.
  - b. Has the project resulted in an increase in arrests? Please explain.
  - c. Do you feel that this has been a wise allocation of additional resources?

➤ Describe the Structure of the Call-in Meetings

1. Can you describe the structure of the call-in meetings?
  - a. What are the goals of the meetings?
  - b. How are offenders chosen to participate in these meetings?
    - i. How does the VPI offender list compare to the list of individuals chosen for this meeting?
    - ii. Do you know the step-by-step process for choosing who participates?
  - c. Which agencies/individuals take on key leadership roles?
  - d. Do you have regular meetings and how often do you meet?
  - e. How do the different agencies work together?
    - i. Do you feel communication between agencies has improved as a result of these meetings or do you feel they have created stress between agencies?
    - ii. Do those who participate in the call-in meetings follow through on their commitments?
2. Can you tell me about the assistance programs that are part of the program?
  - a. Why have these programs been chosen?
  - b. Do you feel there are any gaps, other programs you would like to include?
  - c. Do you or the programs track who/if someone talks to them during the meeting?
  - d. Do the assistance programs let you know if anyone comes to them after the meeting?
3. Is there follow-up after the meeting?
  - a. By law enforcement?
  - b. By assistance programs?

➤ Program Effects

1. Do you think that the call-in meetings are having an effect? (if not covered already)
  - a. On what types of offenders/crimes?
  - b. What specific elements of the call-in meetings do you think are having the most impact?
2. Have you been tracking offender success rates? If so, can we get that information?

➤ Program Strengths, Weaknesses, Suggestions for Improvement

1. What would you say are the strengths or best practices of the offender call-in meetings?
2. How about the weaknesses?
3. What are your suggestions for improving the project?

➤ Finishing up

1. Is there anything else you would like to share with us in regards to the program or in regards to improving the way in which offender call-in meetings in your jurisdiction?

Thank you for your time!



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