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MAYOR LIGHTFOOT ANNOUNCES RFPs FOR \$7.5 MILLION INVESTMENTS IN VIOLENCE INTERRUPTION SERVICES AND TRAUMA-INFORMED VICTIM SUPPORTS

Overseen by the Mayor's Office of Violence Reduction, the funds will expand community-based street outreach and integrate trauma-informed victim services in communities at the highest risk of violence

CHICAGO – To build on the City's historic reductions in crime in 2019, the City of Chicago today released two Request for Proposals (RFPs) for a total of \$7.5 million in investments to expand community-based street outreach and integrate trauma-informed victim services for those who are at the highest risk of violence. As part of Mayor Lightfoot's monumental down payment toward the City's comprehensive violence reduction strategy, the funds represent the first RFPs of the \$11.5 million in community-based public safety investments as part of the City's 2020 budget, a seven-fold increase in funding compared to last year and the largest year-over-year increase in recent history.

"Chicago's violence interrupters, street outreach teams and community-based organizations have immersed themselves into the fabric of neighborhoods under a singular mission to protect the city we all call home," said Mayor Lightfoot. "These unprecedented investments represent the first step towards ensuring that the outreach teams on the ground every day in our communities have the resources to sustain their efforts towards keeping our residents safe."

With hundreds of different street outreach teams and violence interrupters across Chicago, the City has historically never tracked the funding resources, stability and support needs of each community-based organization to identify gaps in services, areas of improvement or resource demands within each neighborhood and community. Allocated through the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH), an [RFP for \\$6 million](#) will now fund a non-profit agency to provide a cohesive cohort of street outreach organizations with violence interruption training and access to cross-sector collaborators such as City services and law enforcement entities. The funds will also expand access to crisis intervention and de-escalation services for individuals at the highest risk for violence.



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“In the 25-plus years that Target Area Development Corporation has been addressing Chicago’s violence problem through outreach, violence interruption, and kindred services, I have never witnessed the City of Chicago financially supporting outreach for nonviolence work,” said Autry Phillips, Executive Director of Target Area DevCorp (TADC). “This is truly unprecedented. Those of us who operate in this space see it as a long overdue and essential tool in increasing safety and reducing the levels of violence in our city – not just a neighborhood or two, but citywide. This kind of investment in street outreach to reduce violence is a big move in the right direction.”

Under Mayor Lightfoot’s leadership, the City has shifted away from a law enforcement-first-and-only strategy, now focusing on enhancing coordination and partnership between the Chicago Police Department (CPD), as well as other key departments, and community-based organizations who provide crisis de-escalation, employment in transitional jobs and cognitive behavioral therapy and supports for those at the center of violence. Across the nation, street outreach and violence interruption services have become an evidence-informed public health approach that has not only been proven to reduce gun violence in communities but also to improve community perceptions of police.

“Safeguarding our communities and building community trust among officers and residents starts by forging traditional policing methods with community outreach programs,” said CPD Superintendent Charlie Beck. “From using their de-escalation skills to interrupt violence and prevent retaliation in Chicago’s neighborhoods, street outreach and community-based organizations have become a critical partner in our fight to curb violence across the city.”

In addition to the City’s investments in street outreach services, an [RFP for \\$1.5 million](#) will be allocated toward programming that integrates trauma-informed victim supports within street outreach to remove gaps in services between communities. Currently, Chicago lacks a comprehensive citywide network of trauma-informed victims services, which is critical in the communities most impacted by violence. With these investments, the City is taking the first step to build a network of services to provide victims of gun violence and their families with trauma-informed counseling, immediate crisis intervention and ongoing social supports, including access to mental health, housing and food assistance.

“Violence needs to be addressed as a public health issue, as it can have a rippling and lasting impact on communities, spreading trauma to residents who historically may not have had access to the treatment they needed,” said CDPH Commissioner Allison Arwady, MD, MPH. “These investments build off the mayor’s Framework for



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Mental Health Equity announced last fall, which prioritizes bringing trauma-informed counseling and crisis intervention supports directly to the neighborhoods and people with the greatest need. The goal is that every resident can get care when and where they need it.”

As part of Mayor Lightfoot’s data-informed, public health approach to violence reduction, the Mayor’s Office identified 15 priority community areas across the city where the new investments will be targeted to ensure resources and supports are provided to communities who need it the most. The priority communities, all of which experienced the highest levels of violence in the city over the past three years, are: Auburn Gresham, Austin, Chicago Lawn, East Garfield Park, Englewood, Greater Grand Crossing, Humboldt Park, New City, North Lawndale, Roseland, South Lawndale, South Shore, West Englewood, West Garfield Park, and West Pullman.

“All residents of Chicago deserve to feel safe in their community, and by investing in evidence-based strategies to prevent violence, we can all collectively build on achieving that singular mission,” said Alderman Taliaferro, chair of the Committee on Public Safety. “Mayor Lightfoot has been a proven leader when it comes to public safety and I applaud her investments towards supporting the men and women behind our community-based organizations, street outreach teams and anti-violence programming.”

To further emphasize the importance of the Mayor Lightfoot’s citywide violence reduction strategy, a new Office of Violence Reduction has been created under the purview of Deputy Mayor of Public Safety Susan Lee, to oversee the implementation of the initiatives, programs and interventions created by these investments. Led by Director of Violence Reduction Norman Kerr, the new office will work closely with departments and agencies to build capacity by coordinating and aligning all resources and services with the violence interrupters, block clubs and street outreach organizations across Chicago’s neighborhoods.

“As someone who has been working in the field of violence intervention and prevention for more than 25 years – I’d be the first to tell you that the City historically has never properly invested in violence prevention work until now,” said Norman Kerr, Director of the Office of Violence Reduction. “While we can never put a dollar limit on protecting our fellow residents, this down payment of investments represents the start of funding a public safety foundation that supports Chicago’s residents, anti-violence teams and community and church leaders who work day and night to ensure the safety of our city.”

In addition to the Office of Violence Reduction, Deputy Mayor Lee will continue to oversee operations of the Chicago Police Department, Chicago Fire Department,



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Office of Emergency and Communications, Civilian Office of Police Accountability, Chicago Police Board, and the newly-formed Office of Public Safety Administration, in addition to creating and implementing a violence reduction strategy for the City. Today's latest investments in the City's all-hands-on-deck public safety infrastructure will build on Mayor Lightfoot's ongoing efforts to ensure Chicago's first responders and community-based organizations have the resources and supports they need to keep our neighborhoods and residents safe.

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