



For Immediate Release

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## **CVI ORGANIZATIONS HIGHLIGHT SERVICES CONTRIBUTING TO PUBLIC SAFETY WHILE MARKING 2025'S HISTORIC DECLINE IN GUN VIOLENCE**

Community violence intervention (CVI) organizations gathered at the South Shore Cultural Center today to mark progress in reducing gun violence last year and publicly update the community. At this year's convening, CVI leaders talked about multiple dimensions of CVI work, including trauma treatment, employment, education and training.

2025's homicide total of 417 was the lowest in 60 years and makes Chicago, alongside Baltimore and Philadelphia, one of the three-fastest declining cities in America. 2025 also marked the first time in more than two decades that the city had four years in a row of declining gun violence.

Chicago CRED Founder Arne Duncan said that the decline is especially notable given that arrests, incarceration levels and police manpower are all down. "We're not arresting our way to these historic declines. People are putting down guns and learning to live safely and that points to the hard work of community violence intervention organizations," he said.

Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle attended the convening and said, "Over the last four years, we have seen what's possible when government and community partners come together to invest in strategies that are rooted in evidence and grounded in trust. CVI is not just a program; it's a commitment to the people and neighborhoods that have carried the burden of violence for far too long. Cook County will continue to invest in this critical work and stand alongside our partners to build a safer future for all local communities."

Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson also attended and said, "Partnerships we've built in our communities—powered by the combined investment of City, County, and State government through the Government Alliance for Safe Communities—have been instrumental to the precipitous decline in violence we've observed in recent years. CVI empowers Chicagoans to drive meaningful change in their neighborhoods while providing stable employment opportunities and pathways to long-term success. We've worked to foster and increase collaboration between CVI professionals and our Police Department, increasing the City's ability to address spikes in violence and respond to community concerns before conflicts escalate. While the Trump administration cuts \$800 million from these programs nationwide, Chicago will continue supporting CVI and fighting to secure the funding necessary to prevent violence and save lives."

Governor Pritzker was unable to attend but was represented by Quiwana Bell, Assistant Secretary with the Illinois Department of Human Services Office of Firearm Violence Prevention. His office provided the following statement: "Community Violence Intervention programs are an effective public safety tool that prioritize prevention," said Governor JB Pritzker. "When we empower trained, credible community responders and other support in our neighborhoods, we build trust and reduce gun violence. Illinois is leading this data-driven approach to saves lives and strengthen communities across our state."

The event opened with remarks and a prayer from St. Sabina's Pastor Michael Pflieger, who said, "People working in violence prevention are not just stopping gun violence. They're helping communities recover from gun violence and thrive. We're grateful for their courage, wisdom and strength."

Several CVI leaders and participants also spoke at the event about services provided by CVI organizations. Dr. Vanessa Perry DeReef, is Chief Training Officer at the Metropolitan Peace Academy, a training center in Pilsen which has trained more than 700 CVI workers since 2018. She said, "What we're seeing in Chicago is the result of years of intentional investment in people. When credible messengers are equipped with the right tools, trauma awareness, and conflict mediation skills, they help shift norms, stabilize lives, and create safer communities from the inside out. This decline in violence reflects the professionalism of the CVI workforce and the power of meeting people with opportunity instead of punishment."

Dr. Donald Tyler, Director of Clinical Services for Chicago CRED also spoke and said, "To stop gun violence we have to engage with people who have been hurt, so they can release their pain, regulate their emotions, and find peace. It's a vital step in the road to healing."

On behalf of private funders that have helped launch and sustain Chicago's CVI network, Esther Franco-Payne, Executive Director of a consortium of 60 foundations and donors called the Partnership for Safe and Peaceful Communities (PSPC) said, "After a decade of investment to help build Chicago's extraordinary CVI ecosystem, philanthropic leaders remain fully committed to staying the course and making Chicago one of the safest cities in America. The results seen in 2025 affirm that these strategies are working and saving lives."

Jorge Matos, Director of SC2 (*Scaling Community Violence Intervention for a Safer Chicago*), also provided an update on the two-year old initiative to take CVI to scale in key Chicago neighborhoods. Currently SC2 is being fully implemented in North Lawndale, Austin, Humboldt Park and Little Village. Additional communities are in the pipeline for scaling and working to strengthen their CVI practice.

Matos said, "SC2 is testing the theory that CVI at scale can lead to community-level transformation and permanent reductions in gun violence. While it's too early to draw conclusions, the data so far is very promising."

Additional speakers include:

- Jason Little, Director of Strategic Initiatives, Chicago CRED
- James Mitchell, a Crisis Prevention & Response Unit Field Manager for MPI,
- CRED Clinician Dorothy Wilson, CRED participant Charles Coleman
- Michael Lufrano, Executive VP, Community, Government and Legal Affairs, Chicago CUBS
- CRED Participant and future CUBS employee Tyrell Frazier
- Bamani Obadele, Acclivus Community Engagement Director
- Raekwon Kelsor – IMAN Alumnus
- Vaughn Bryant, Executive Director, MPI.

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