



MEMORANDUM

To: Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Montique McClary, Interim City Manager
J. Phillip Webster, Interim Chief of Police

Date: August 19, 2022

Subject: Consideration to Apply for the OJJDP FY2022 Youth Violence Prevention Program

BACKGROUND:

The Elizabeth City Police Department wishes to submit an application to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) FY 2022 Youth Violence Prevention Program. The anticipated total amount to be awarded under solicitation is \$1,000,000.00. Four awards are anticipated to be granted with a maximum award amount of \$250,000.00. There are no matching funds, which means there will be no budgetary impact to the City.

ANALYSIS:

Effective Dec. 1, 2019, 16 and 17-year-old individuals who commit crimes in North Carolina are no longer automatically charged in the adult criminal justice system. In 2017, lawmakers raised the age of juvenile jurisdiction for nonviolent crimes to the age of 18, following years of research, study and education on this topic. The 'Raise the Age' initiative became law only through a strong, bipartisan coalition of support from all three branches of government, law enforcement and advocacy organizations, which continues today.

Preventing youth and young adult violence is a critical issue for many communities across the nation. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), homicide is the third leading cause of death for young people ages 15–24 and the leading cause of death for non-Hispanic Black or African American youth. In 2020, youth under the age of 18 were involved in about 8% of homicides in which the assailant was known. However, older youth and young adults, between the ages of 18 and 24, were involved in more than 30% of homicides in which the assailant was known in 2020. Youth in general are too often impacted by community violence as witnesses/bystanders, victims, or perpetrators.

Adolescence is the most common period for gang entry and gang involvement, and the late teen years and early adulthood have been associated with increased levels of delinquency as well as violence.

For these youth, it is well known that there are risk factors and protective factors related to juvenile delinquency, violence, and gang involvement. These risk and protective factors span across five life domains, including (1) family, (2) peer group, (3) school, (4) individual characteristics, and (5) community conditions. There is a cumulative effect that increases the likelihood of violence as the youth experience and are exposed to additional risk factors. On the reverse, there are protective factors such as parental involvement and monitoring, family and peer support, and coping skills. Early intervention prevents the onset of delinquent behavior and supports the development of a youth's assets and resilience. While many past approaches focus on remediating visible and/or longstanding disruptive behavior, research has shown that prevention efforts are more effective.

Regarding youth gang membership, risk factors for gang membership include having unhealthy relationships with family, peer groups, schools, and the community (Howell, J. 2005. "Moving risk factors into developmental theories of gang membership." *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice* 3(4):334–354). The more risk factors these youths are exposed to, including individual characteristics, the greater the likelihood that they will join a gang (Howell, J.C. and Griffiths, E. 2018. *Gangs in America's Communities*. Sage Publications).

Ultimately, youth who are impacted by or involved in violence are affected by the interaction of multiple factors, including a young person's characteristics and experiences, as well as by the relationships, community, and society within which young people develop. The fact that in 2019, the number of arrests involving youth was at its lowest level since at least 1980, including a 58 percent decrease in youth arrests between 2010 and 2019 shows that when prevention efforts focus on these life domains, have a foundation in local data, and include engagement from necessary stakeholders, we can see the benefits of our prevention efforts.

Participation in the Youth Violence Prevention Program will be a huge asset to Elizabeth City in that this program is a results-oriented, collaborative approach to public safety that utilizes law enforcement, community partnerships and strategic intervention efforts to focus on the at risk youth in middle and high school. The program's goal is to work together with the Elizabeth Parks and Recreation, the Police Athletic League (PAL), Juvenile Justice, the District Attorney's Office and the local Juvenile Crime Prevention Council (JCPC) to reduce violent crime involving our youth in our communities.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

By motion, approve the Elizabeth City Police Department's submission of a preliminary grant application to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) FY 2022 Youth Violence Prevention Program in the amount up to \$250,000.00.