

### GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION & JUSTICE REFORM

More than 110,000 Americans are killed or injured by guns every year – in community violence, mass shootings, domestic violence, suicides, and accidents. The research is clear: easy access to firearms is a root cause of this unacceptable threat to our public health and safety. The Joyce Foundation is therefore committed to strategies that limit availability of firearms for those at risk of violence.

Joyce was one of the first foundations to take on gun violence when it established this program in 1993, joining with public health scholars and advocates to develop a new approach that sought to prevent gun violence before it occurs through research and evidence-based policies to reduce the risk of violence. Over the past 25 years, our grant making has helped build the body of evidence finding that access to guns is a risk factor for gun violence. It has contributed to the development and implementation of gun violence prevention policies, and built broad-based coalitions to advocate for them.

Today, Joyce continues to partner with community leaders, law enforcement officials, policy makers, advocates, researchers, and other funders to ensure gun safety policies are grounded in the best available evidence and the experiences of those closest to the problem. Our grant making addresses gun violence in all its forms and in all the communities it touches.

Gun violence in urban areas is experienced most acutely by young people of color and their families and communities. Too often, these communities also face disproportionate burdens from involvement with the criminal justice system. Gun violence and the justice system's response are two sides of the same coin. Weak gun laws allow illegal guns to proliferate, causing shootings and homicides that devastate communities. But when the dominant response to gun violence is overly aggressive policing, prosecution, and sentencing, justice system involvement for young people is a risk factor for future violence. To address these interconnected challenges, the foundation expanded its gun violence prevention program in 2017 to include a focus on justice reform.

### FOCUS AREAS

#### Limit Easy Access to Guns

Multiple studies over several decades confirm that easy access to guns is a risk factor for violence. It increases the number of homicides, suicides and accidental shootings, and the risk to women abused by their partners. Simply put, the U.S. has many more gun deaths than other developed nations because we have many more guns – and lax gun laws that make them easily accessible to those at high risk of violence. We support several strategies to improve policies and practices to reduce easy access to guns:

- \* Generate and disseminate research and data to inform policy making
- \* Develop policies to reduce access to firearms, advocate for those policies, and support their implementation and enforcement
- \* Develop education campaigns to make sure research findings on the risks of firearms are shared broadly, especially with the next generation
- \* Use the courts to uphold common-sense gun violence prevention policies and challenge extreme gun rights measures.

The Joyce Foundation also plays a key role in engaging other funders in these gun violence prevention strategies, in part through our leadership of the funder collaborative, Fund for a Safer Future.

#### Build Greater Police-Community Trust and Legitimacy Through 21st Century Policing

Police are on the front lines of America's gun violence problem, facing a proliferation of illegal guns and high rates of gun-related homicides and injuries. Departments that have earned the trust of their communities can work in partnership with residents to reduce violence.

But too often, police departments use aggressive tactics in responding to the violence, including street stops, use of force, and arrests for low-level offenses. There is little or no evidence that these tactics are effective in reducing violent crime, and considerable evidence that they disproportionately harm communities of color. The Joyce Foundation supports strategies to promote constitutional policing, improve police legitimacy and build police-community trust:

- \* Advance local reform initiatives in Great Lakes police departments
- \* Evaluate opportunities for state policy reforms
- \* Produce and disseminate research on best practices for reform.

#### Reduce Incarceration of Young People

For many years, "tough on crime" approaches have contributed to over-incarceration of communities of color, with little evidence they improve public safety. In fact, justice system involvement for young people is a risk factor for future violence. Changing policies and systems to limit justice system involvement for young people will reduce incarceration, minimize the risk of future violence, improve outcomes for young offenders, and improve community safety by holding young people accountable in developmentally appropriate ways and focusing scarce law enforcement resources on violent offenders and those who supply them with guns.

The Joyce Foundation supports several strategies to reduce the overreliance on incarceration of young people:

- \* Data collection and research to understand the landscape of the criminal justice system's response to young gun offenders
- \* Evaluate opportunities for state policy reforms to reduce overreliance on incarceration for young offenders
- \* Pilot and evaluate promising models for reducing incarceration of young offenders.

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