

## Blueprint to Improve Public Safety in New Castle County

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Public safety is critical to everything our county does. First and foremost, we must do everything to make sure our county is a safe and secure place for families to live, work and raise a family. Unfortunately, violent crime in our county today is at record levels. And we are spending as much as we have ever spent on public safety.

Our county police does an outstanding job and often an extraordinary job. As the equipment and technology of policing have changed, the county police department continues to grow and change in ways that make us safer. We will continue to push for the finest equipment and technology so that we all can be safe.

But when 14 and 15 year old children are shooting guns at each other, we cannot blame the police. We are at risk of losing an entire generation of children to crime, violence and drugs, in certain neighborhoods of Wilmington, New Castle, Bear and across our county. We need a comprehensive community response, a smarter understanding of those who seek to turn certain neighborhoods in our county into centers of violence. And we need to develop policy that ultimately provides the perpetrators of violence alternatives to violence. This must be a collaborative and comprehensive effort, focused on providing intensive educational, spiritual, psychological, career training support to those with the highest risk characteristics.

This violence produces immeasurable suffering among victims' families. The violence causes intensive and often irreversible trauma among extended families, neighbors and community. The violence strains government and non-profit resources and, in a competitive national and global marketplace, forces us to disproportionately direct resources to fighting crime. And the violence has a chilling effect on business, driving jobs and tax revenue out of our largest city and out of state.

We can do better. As this policy proposal details, with early identification of high risk individuals, creative engagement for those at the highest risk, improved police-community relations, serious career opportunities for those with criminal records, the Age Zero Initiative and better inter-governmental collaboration, we will begin to reverse the spike in shootings and homicides across our county and create safer neighborhoods to live, work and raise a family.



Violent crime in our county has increased in the last four years and is among the highest levels in New Castle County history. In the last 3 years, shootings in Wilmington are up by a staggering 48%. In the rest of the county, shootings are up 28%. There were 51 shootings outside of Wilmington last year. Moreover, in the 3 years prior to Mr. Gordon taking office, there were a total of 20 homicides in the New Castle County Police Department's jurisdiction. But in his first three years in office, there were 32 homicides, a 60% increase.

And most importantly, residents of this county do not *feel* safe. School students in New Castle County are surveyed on a yearly basis about whether they feel unsafe because of crime in their neighborhood. And since 2012, the number of students in the county who feel unsafe has *tripled*.

Last month USA Today ranked Delaware the fourth most violent state in the United States. We have a violence problem that is severe and out of control.

With expanding pockets of violence in New Castle and Bear, as Wilmington's shooting epidemic expands beyond the city limits, increased collaboration between police departments is vital. New Castle County Police is among the finest in the country, and we need to collaborate with municipal police departments across our county to improve crime prevention.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Because only a relatively small proportion of individuals are involved in firearm crimes, accurately focusing prevention efforts could have a significant impact on lethal violence." We need to identify those with the highest risk characteristics and collaborate with city, state and federal officials, and with the private and non-profit sector to develop a broad range of programs to address violence at its roots.

In my personal experience, so many perpetrators of violence choose violence because the networks of support and comradery found on the streets provide a comradery and respect that the individual cannot find anywhere else. To a boy, growing up in poverty, without a relationship with his father and facing academic struggle, the companionship, love, leadership and often wealth he can find in a violent street life fills a powerful void.

Few New Castle County residents engage in violent crime. We need to collaborate with state and local police departments and deploy all technology that is available to identify the small number of potentially violent residents.

The earlier we can identify those individuals and direct or, where legally permissible, force adults into intensive interventions, interventions that directly train and channel the individual into career opportunities, the more success we will have diffusing violent crime at its roots.

## 1. Early Identification of High Risk Individuals

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While it is optimal to intervene in a young person's life before he or she turns to violence, there are also effective ways to intervene among young people who already exhibit violent tendencies. The 2015 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention report on gun violence in Wilmington provides some guidance in this regard.

It is possible to accurately predict some individuals that are likely to commit firearm violence, based on certain risk factors, such as a prior history of violence, a visit to the emergency room for a gunshot or stab wound, unemployment and receiving governmental assistance. The CDC recommends targeted interventions that focus on preventing violence by a small subset of the youth population who are highly likely to engage in firearm violence, based on these risk factors.

Various police departments across the state have done significant work in this regard. We will improve upon that work. And, where appropriate, we will collaborate with those outside of police departments, academics, educators, community workers and others, to improve upon our efforts to accurately identify those most prone to commit violent crime.

So our first step will be to collaborate with other governmental and non-governmental entities to identify those most likely to commit violence. Then we will engage them with intensive, data-driven targeted assistance.

### Emergency Room Services

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, of the 569 individuals involved in firearm crimes in Wilmington between 2009 and 2014, 48% had visited an emergency room, usually as a victim of a physical fight, a shooting victim or an encounter with police. Our county government will make it a priority to collaborate with federal, state and local officials, along with area hospitals, to equip emergency rooms to connect patients to extensive non-medical services to assist individuals who visit an emergency room and have a history of high risk behavior.

### Collaborate with Parents Seeking Help

Countless mothers who have lost their sons in New Castle County have told me that they called the police while their sons were still alive. A parent, grandparent, aunt or uncle calls the police and begs the police to arrest their son. The family member knows the son is in danger. Frequently they hear the word on the street. So they ask the police to take the son away to jail or a safe place. The police rarely do this. It is not really their job to do that. So we should establish a place for mothers to call that will trigger intensive anti-violence intervention.

## **2. Creative Engagement For Those at the Highest Risk**

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### Broaden Cease Violence

We should collaborate with the City of Wilmington in its Cease Violence program and expand it into the highest crime neighborhoods of our county. Cease Violence hires “violence interrupters,” individuals with street credibility who establish relationships with local youths known to be at the highest risk of committing firearm violence. The interrupters earn the trust of the youths and coach them on mediating conflicts, preventing retaliations and maintaining peace between potential rivals. The interrupters also encourage the youths to seek treatment and access helpful services that would provide them with a chance to leave the streets.

As recommended by the Wilmington Public Safety Strategies Commission, we should collaborate with state and federal sources to strengthen the program’s administration and its collection and analysis of data and expand its hours of operations. We should also develop regular data-driven tools to monitor and evaluate Cease Violence so that it continues to improve its success rate.

### Re-Open Community Centers and Expand Programming

Any teacher knows that whenever you give kids and young adults free, unstructured time, it is likely that some will get in trouble. We need to re-open shuttered community centers in the most violent neighborhoods in our county as a matter of urgency. The federal delegation, the state, the county, the cities and towns and non-private and corporate partners must collaborate to find the financial resources and seek creative funding solutions to expand opportunities. Kids everywhere in our county should have places to learn and swim and program computers, and they should have those opportunities during the times when data shows us violence is most likely to occur.

## **3. Improving Police-Community Relations**

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We will actively support the Mounted Police Unit and continue the quality work of the Community Services Unit.

### Improve Recruitment

In order to earn the trust of our county’s communities, our police force needs to reflect the diversity of the communities that it protects. Communities with high populations of racial minority residents tend to have higher levels of mistrust of the police. And when the local police department is not diverse, it feeds into that sense of mistrust. This was a central factor in the recent unrest in Ferguson, Missouri. Ferguson is two-thirds African-American, but the police department only had three black officers in a department of 53.

New Castle County is fortunate to have such a diverse population- but our county leadership does not appear to be focused on increasing diversity within the County Police force. The last police academy recruit class consisted entirely of white male officers. In 2016, that is not acceptable. The New Castle County Police Department must earn the trust and support of the communities it polices. We must place a greater emphasis on recruiting classes that look like New Castle County.

In addition to having a diverse police force, we also need an educated one. Studies have found that officers with college educations tend to demonstrate professional attitudes, tolerant views, independent thinking, strong ethics, good written and oral communication, problem-solving abilities, flexibility, self-confidence, motivation, discipline, and public relations skills. For police departments, these traits result in numerous positive outcomes, including fewer injuries, disciplinary problems, preventable accidents, sick days, and citizen complaints.

New Castle County Police recently dropped its requirement of a college degree for new police recruits. This is a grievous mistake, and will inevitably lead to a diminishment of the quality of the police force. We understand that many prospective recruits cannot afford to earn a college degree, and we also understand that exceptions should be made, particularly in the case of applicants with military service experience. In cases where quality applicants have not completed their degrees, the solution should not be to abandon the degree requirement altogether. Instead, if a recruit does not have a college degree and cannot afford tuition, the police department should at least require him or her to work toward a degree after joining the force. For these recruits, New Castle County Police should partner with the state's Law Enforcement Officers Education Reimbursement Program and subsidize the officer's tuition.

#### Bring the Friendly Officer Back to School

We will consistently monitor the most effective community engagement policing programs. We will actively seek funding to reinstitute programs like Officer Friendly in schools and communities most impacted by violence across the county.

Schools can also play a central role in helping kids stay away from violence. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) maintains that universal school-based violence prevention programs should be a core component of any strategy to reduce violence. School-based programs can be effective at reducing violence by teaching conflict resolution, emotional control, emotional self-awareness, positive social skills, self-esteem, social problem solving, and teamwork.

School anti-violence programs can be offered from pre-kindergarten through high school. They have been found to result in a 15.0% reduction in violent behavior among students overall, and a 29.2% reduction in violent behavior among high-schoolers. They appear to be effective in all school environments, regardless of the socioeconomic status of the students or the local crime rate.

County government should therefore collaborate with the state Department of Education and school districts in our county to ensure that all children in New Castle County are exposed to these helpful programs. By consistently teaching children how to resist violence from an early age, we can go a long way toward preventing them from engaging in violent crime as they grow older.

#### Block Level Partnerships

New Castle County Police should establish block level partnerships in the neighborhoods with epidemic levels of violent crime. Those block level partnerships should include neighborhood associations, non-profit organizations, faith communities and other positive neighborhood influences. Where appropriate the New Castle County Police will collaborate with municipal police departments on these block level partnerships. The police will engage and regularly communicate with these non-police groups and develop sustainable partnerships to improve community safety.

#### **4. Serious Career Opportunities for Individuals with Criminal Records**

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Nearly every individual incarcerated today in New Castle County will one day be released into society. Nearly two-thirds of individuals who leave our criminal justice system are arrested again within three years of their release. That is not acceptable. We will collaborate with federal, state and city governments and with the private and non-profit sector to enhance and improve programs to decrease recidivism.

#### Pay for Success to Reduce Recidivism

Roca, an organization in Massachusetts, serves young males, between 17 and 24, who have already been involved in violent crime and have been incarcerated, either as juveniles or adults. These individuals are the most difficult youths, the most likely to kill, according to data, and the most critical that we find a way to help.

Roca uses intensive case management and data analysis to help these young men build relationships, learn job skills, obtain employment and become independent. Case managers build strong relationships with the men, their families and their probation officers. They closely supervise the young men, frequently meeting with them, calling them and meeting them at their homes, places of work and where they hang out, even if the young men are disengaged, not showing up or not staying in touch. The program relentlessly makes every effort to engage these men and establish relationships with them. If he doesn't show up for work, they call his house. If he does not answer, the case worker will go to his house. If he is not at home, the case worker will visit his girlfriend's house, his cousin's house, his best friend's house and his grandmother's house. As a result of its forceful, comprehensive approach, Roca has been very successful at lowering re-offense rates among the young people it serves.

This is precisely the type of program we need in New Castle County. The individuals who are committing the most serious crimes here are often not responsive to the traditional programming that we offer them. They are in need of something more targeted and intensive. We need a program like Roca program that specializes in serving the very highest-risk youths and which helps them to rebuild their lives.

It is costly to start a new, intensive program that prevents youth violence. New Castle County, as well as state and local governments, must get creative when it comes to obtaining funding sources for programs. This is an area in which we can again learn from Roca. Roca partnered with the State of Massachusetts and Third Sector Capital Partners, a private fund, to launch the Massachusetts Juvenile Justice Pay for Success Project. This project provided \$27 million to Roca through a social impact bond. That means that the \$27 million investment for the project is provided by Third Sector. And, the state is only obligated to repay Third Sector's investment, plus a reasonable financial return, if Roca hits certain outcome benchmarks, including reducing recidivism and reincarceration by a certain percentage.

In other words, the government is only obligated to pay for the program if it is successful. The private investor pays for the program because it can receive a financial return if the data shows the program works. Using this model to fund violence prevention programs is highly cost-efficient, as it means the government will not pay for ineffective programs. The county, state and local governments should work together to develop a social impact bond program for the county, so that we can increase our investments in evidence-based violence prevention programs.

#### Encourage Hiring Those With Arrest Records

New Castle County can also reduce recidivism and improve public safety by examining its hiring practices. Many individuals with arrest records find it difficult to get their lives back together because they are unable to find employment. This is because employers can be reluctant to hire them on account of their record. Without employment, some individuals may be tempted to return to the streets and relapse into their prior lives of drugs and crime. They need a steady job, serious career opportunities, to stay on the right track.

County government should actively recruit and hire qualified individuals with arrest records who are seeking employment. The county should establish relationships with Probation & Parole, re-entry organizations and other social service agencies and organizations that assist people with criminal histories. Through these partnerships, the county can provide second chance pathways to serious careers.

Further, the county can also encourage its contractors to hire ex-offenders. When the county releases requests for proposals, it can require bidding contractors to report on their hiring practices in regard to individuals with criminal histories. The county should prioritize a contractor's bid if it can demonstrate that it has a practice of hiring ex-offenders.

Furthermore, under the state's Ban the Box law, the county is already prohibited from asking job applicants about their criminal histories until an interview is completed. The county should consider going beyond this requirement, and only asking about an applicant's criminal history after a conditional job offer is made. For positions that are not sensitive or which do not have a high level of responsibility, the county should refrain from asking about criminal history altogether, or at least inquire about felonies only. The county should also ensure that it is not refusing any job applicants unless their criminal history is directly relevant to the job, and the refused applicant actually poses a clear and substantial risk.

## **5. The Age Zero Initiative**

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Most of our neighbors who engage in violence are deeply troubled young people, often under the age of 30. But too often the paths to a life of trouble and crime begin long before even the teenage years.

Very often, the path to crime begins in infancy. Too many children in our county are not born into peaceful, stable homes and grow up in environments characterized by massive spiritual, medical and economic disruptions. As they grow from infants to teenagers, they experience a host of stresses and difficulties. Academic struggles and social exclusion can contribute to these stresses and difficulties. The result of all of these difficulties can be a young person who is angry, alone and prone to violence. In such a setting, the lure of the streets is incredibly powerful.

Our crime fighting must begin with interventions at Age Zero, right when a child is born. And the county will approach the prevention of epidemic levels of violent crime with an understanding that the roots of criminal behavior often start in infancy. Improved infant health and nutrition, for example, contributes to reduction in child abuse and neglect, improved educational outcomes and peaceful communities. The county will work to extend programs like the Nurse Family Partnership, which provides high quality nurse home visitation for first-time mothers living in poverty, from early in the mother's pregnancy until the child's second birthday. For decades, the Nurse Family Partnership has had a dramatically positive impact on the child and the community. Studies have shown that this program improves the child's well-being, safety, and school readiness, in addition to improving the health and employment prospects of the mother.

The Nurse Family Partnership nationally is over 40 years old and, in 2014, was expanded 150% to 20 nurses throughout Delaware. We will advocate and collaborate with a goal of providing Nurse Family Partnership services to every family in New Castle County that qualifies for them. The county must also collaborate to increase awareness of the program and encourage new mothers to join the program.

The success of this program is crucial toward protecting children and making sure that they grow up in a stable, healthy home. The more mothers we help with this program, the more children will grow into healthy teenagers and young adults who have stable lives and do not turn to violence.

We also will collaborate fully to apply the lessons of programs like the Harlem Children's Zone to our communities most impacted by violence.

## **6. Extensive Governmental Collaboration**

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Due to the especially alarming levels of violent crime in Wilmington, collaboration with the Wilmington Police Department and the city's leadership is particularly important. Mr. Gordon recognized this when he ran for office in 2012. He criticized the then-incumbent County Executive for not intervening to reduce the violence in Wilmington. In response, Mr. Gordon and Dennis Williams ran side-by-side, promising to work closely together to solve Wilmington's violent crime problem. But since both candidates won the election, they seemed to have forgotten about that promise. The collaboration has been sorely lacking, while the violence in Wilmington continues to get worse and worse.

Unfortunately, Mr. Gordon does not collaborate effectively with leaders at either state government or Wilmington city government. And it costs our county. Mr. Gordon exhibits a go-it-alone mentality and appears to have little desire to cooperate with them. This perspective does not serve our county well and results in missed opportunities to unite together to truly solve the crime and violence problem in our county.

Recently, the County Police has been providing assistance to the Wilmington Police through the supplemental Mobile Enforcement Team (MET) that operates in Wilmington one day per week. While this support is helpful, it is not nearly adequate enough to substantially reduce violence in Wilmington. The county needs to provide much more robust cooperation and support to Wilmington.

In early 2015, the Wilmington Public Safety Strategies Commission hired Vigilant Resources International and the Police Foundation to study the violent crime problem in Wilmington and make recommendations for the Wilmington Police Department. The report found that the Wilmington PD had many serious deficiencies that affect its ability to fight violent crime. Since that time, the Wilmington PD has improved its capabilities by implementing many of the report's recommendations.

With stronger collaboration, New Castle County Police and the Wilmington Police Department can implement a better case management system, learn new community policing techniques, use better ballistics technology, develop data analysis skills and handle and address citizen complaints.

Unfortunately, though, the county has not been as helpful as it could be. For example, the 2015 Wilmington Public Safety Strategies Commission found that the Wilmington Police Department's ability to investigate serious violent crime was lacking.

This is unacceptable. The county should show that it is serious about collaborate to stop crime in Wilmington, and it should provide the investigators that the city needs. In the event the city government erects impediments to proposed collaboration, the public should be made aware of these impediments.

Moreover, the New Castle County Police need to work with the Wilmington Police Department to jointly implement effective, evidence-based strategies to reduce gun violence in the county.

The county has already taken a positive step forward with its increased use of crime data. It has implemented the Targeted Analytical Policing System (TAPS) and opened a fusion center, which provides real-time crime data. And the Wilmington Police Department has followed suit and taken similar measures to increase its use of data. The result is that the New Castle County Police and the Wilmington Police Department have both improved their ability to engage in predictive policing, which stops crime before they happens.

However, the New Castle County Police need to work together with the Wilmington Police Department to take their predictive policing strategies to the next level. Currently, the New Castle County Police and the Wilmington Police Department are primarily focused on predicting crime using geographic data. We identify violent crime “hot spots,” and focus policing resources on those locations.

But many successful police departments throughout the country have gone beyond merely targeting hot spots and have been targeting hot *offenders* as well, that is, offenders who are highly likely to commit crimes. In other words, they do not only look at *where* crime is likely to occur, but also *who* is likely to be committing the crimes.

Furthermore, many of these same police departments focus their predictive policing efforts on the prevention of shootings and homicides. These departments make a point to extensively analyze shooting and homicide data, identify offenders who are most likely to engage in gun violence, and develop targeted strategies that are specifically geared toward preventing those offenders from committing gun violence. Neither New Castle County nor Wilmington, however, is doing this.

New Castle County Police should therefore collaborate with the Wilmington Police Department to integrate predictive offender-centric gun violence data into their policing strategies.

The Los Angeles Police Department, for example, has made use of Chronic Offender Bulletins, which are real-time intelligence briefs that provide detailed information on the most prolific and violent offenders in the jurisdiction. These bulletins help police departments to identify crime trends, solve investigations, and engage in proactive enforcement activities against potential acts of gun violence. In other words, it provides a list of offenders for police to proactively conduct surveillance or investigate.

Violent Crime Impacts Teams, which have been used in cities across the country, are another example of an offender-centered predictive approach that focuses on gun violence. These teams

focus on the most prolific offenders, the ones who are most likely to commit a shooting or a homicide. The teams proactively monitor, investigate and gather intelligence on these individuals in order to collect information that can be used for prosecution.

Furthermore, the City of Baltimore has implemented a Gun Offender Registry for individuals who have been previously convicted of gun crimes. Offenders on the registry are required to check in with law enforcement every 6 months, and they are also subjected to periodic home visits by the police. This allows police to more effectively monitor individuals who are at a high risk to commit a shooting. And such a program should be implemented collaboratively with the Wilmington Police Department.

In addition to specific measures like these, many cities have developed and implemented comprehensive, multi-dimensional strategies to target gun violence with offender-centric approaches. A popular and highly successful example is Operation Ceasefire. Operation Ceasefire was first implemented by the Boston Police Department. It is predicated on the understanding that very small groups of individuals commit the majority of the serious violent crime in a city or jurisdiction. In Boston, 61 small groups of people, comprising only 0.3% of the population, were involved in 60% of the city's homicides.

In Operation Ceasefire, the police analyze data to identify these small groups of highly violent individuals. The police then use "focused deterrence" by reaching out to these groups and individuals and notifying them that law enforcement, in coordination with prosecutors, courts, and probation, will henceforth begin to severely respond to individuals and groups who commit any new acts of gun violence through more immediate and intensive investigations and prosecutions, further disruption of their illegal drug activities, serving outstanding warrants on them, seizing drug their proceeds and related assets, and requesting and enforcing stronger bail terms for them.

In other words, if a member of a group is involved in a shooting, the police will ensure he or she is dealt with very severely and that his or her associates will face more intensive scrutiny and stricter enforcement that they have ever experienced before.

At the same time, the police coordinate with service providers, probation officers, and churches to ensure that services are being offered to the people within these groups in order to offer them a path away from crime and violence. The idea is to create a reliable system with strong negative and positive incentives. People who participate in shootings, as well as their associates, will be subjected to immediate and severe consequences. But, if they choose to abstain from violence, they will get all the help that they need to pull their lives together.

Moreover, in Operation Ceasefire, the police also use data to identify the most problematic and destructive firearm trafficking activities, and subsequently focus anti-firearm policing efforts on those activities. Specifically, Operation Ceasefire increases enforcement against traffickers who deal the types of guns most often used in shootings, guns most commonly used by gangs, and guns with short time-to-crime periods. The program also involves enhanced efforts to restore obliterated serial numbers.

Operation Ceasefire dramatically decreased violent crime in Boston, and it has subsequently been adopted by many police agencies around the country. New Castle County and the City of Wilmington should jointly adopt this strategy, or a similar effective strategy, so that we can curb our county's devastating gun violence problem once and for all.

Another key element to fighting violent crime is collaboration with other government agencies and the community. The New Castle County Police needs to increase its engagement with other agencies and organizations in our communities who have a role in preventing gun violence in our county.

As County Executive, I will put my full energy and effort into solving the violence problem that is plaguing our county. That means reaching out to leaders at all levels of government, as well as groups and individuals outside government, pushing for innovative, data-driven solutions, and working together to comprehensively wage a fight against violence that makes our county safer.

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The county can and must do more to combat the violent crime problem in our county. The problem is far worse than Mr. Gordon admits, and we need to take swift and urgent action to restore law and order in all neighborhoods of our county.

In order to truly solve this crisis, the county needs to forge effective partnerships and work together to develop and implement new solutions to prevent and fight against violent crime. The county needs to do everything it can to stop young people from turning to violence, improve our police force's ability to fight violent crime, make better use of predictive crime data, work hand-in-hand with the Wilmington Police Department, and collaborate with other governments and the community.

As County Executive, I will work tirelessly to advance these goals and ensure that every corner of New Castle County once again becomes a safe and peaceful place to live, work and raise a family.