

# NON-FATAL SHOOTING AND HOMICIDE ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) National Public Safety Partnership (PSP) program provides an innovative framework for the US Department of Justice (DOJ) to enhance its support of state, tribal, and local law enforcement officers and prosecutors in the investigation, prosecution, and deterrence of violent crime, especially crime related to gun violence, gangs, and drug trafficking.

Departments and agencies interested in improving their violent crime reduction capacity participate in BJA-sponsored reviews of departmental functions ([crime analysis](#), [grants landscape](#), [investigative](#), [technology](#), etc.) to develop a baseline understanding of their challenges and areas for growth. **The non-fatal shooting (NFS) and homicide assessments help agencies evaluate their capabilities and their capacity to respond to homicides and NFS incidents, complete a comprehensive investigation, and coordinate with prosecutors.** The assessments also identify the various NFS and homicide training and technical assistance (TTA) opportunities to support agencies in building and enhancing their investigative capacities.

Thirteen medium- to large-sized law enforcement agencies across the Northeast, South, Midwest, and West have completed NFS and homicide assessments, allowing an opportunity to identify and share common themes, technical gaps, and recommendations found across law enforcement agencies nationwide. Additional information on the analysis and other common findings and recommendations can be found in our *Non-Fatal Shooting and Homicide Assessment Summary Report*, and other reports in the assessment summary series, including the [Crime Analysis Assessment Summary Report](#), [Grant Landscape Review Summary Report](#), and [Technology Assessment Summary Report](#).



## MODERNIZE AND IMPROVE INVESTIGATIVE APPROACHES

### • Common findings

- Non-standardized investigative files and organization can increase the burden of voluminous discovery requests and hinder agency investigations and report writing. This can present challenges to getting charges filed and cases successfully prosecuted.
- Agencies face delays in submitting evidence for National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) analysis.
- Agencies may not use all investigative techniques or tools available to them, because they lack awareness of what is available or they misunderstand policies, practices, or laws.

### • Common recommendations

- Reduce [detective caseload](#) and let detectives focus on specific types of violent crime.
- Understand [requirements](#) and establish policies, protocols, and practices with the aim to complete investigative practices, including [NIBIN analysis](#), in a timely manner for all shooting incidents where shell casings are located.
- Revise current case management procedures to include instituting regular [case reviews](#), [investigative checklists](#) and [NIBIN lead checklists](#), and reports to monitor the status of cases; [standardizing investigative files](#); and [implementing vertical prosecution](#).
- Train patrol officers and detectives in [policies and practices](#), such as implementing [investigative techniques](#) and [technology](#) that provide easier, timelier collection of information.
- Explore the feasibility of using investigative techniques such as [Perkins Agents](#), detective-made photographic lineups, and implied Miranda waivers.
- Continually educate [executives](#) and investigators about [current practices](#) and available technologies.



## MANAGE INVESTIGATOR WORKLOADS

### • Common findings

- Requiring detectives to investigate several types of crime can hinder them from developing specialized knowledge of and techniques for handling a particular type of violent crime.
- If detectives are overwhelmed, the quality of investigations may be lower, as will the chance of charges being filed and cases successfully prosecuted.
- Patrol officers are sometimes underutilized in supporting or advancing investigations.



- **Common recommendations**

- Designate detectives to investigate either exclusively homicides or NFS. This specialization allows detectives to become more skilled and efficient in investigating cases of that type and focus more on specific kinds of cases.
- [Create groups consisting of cross-unit personnel to address gun violence](#) and provide technical and situational knowledge to investigations.
- To promote more comprehensive investigations, reallocate resources to reduce [caseloads](#).
- Obtain [training and technical assistance](#) to ensure investigators can use their time most efficiently.



## MAXIMIZE INVESTIGATIVE COLLABORATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES

- **Common findings**

- Local law enforcement agencies may not have the resources, knowledge, or expertise that federal law enforcement agencies might contribute to investigations.
- Agencies may not understand why prosecuting organizations decline to file charges on investigations. While investigators believe they have put together a strong case, prosecutors may be unable or unwilling to file charges based on the case assembled.
- Local law enforcement agencies often do not develop strategic plans that take into account the possible contributions of federal law enforcement, creating inefficiencies.

- **Common recommendations**

- Collaborate with local and federal criminal justice partners, including [local prosecutors](#); the [Federal Bureau of Investigation \(FBI\)](#); the [Drug Enforcement Administration \(DEA\)](#); the [US Marshals Service \(USMS\)](#); the [Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives \(ATF\)](#); and the corresponding US Attorney's Office.
- Consider sharing workspaces with or creating permanent one-on-one partnerships with criminal justice peers.
- Develop specific tactical and investigative plans that include federal partners.
- Identify the parameters of cases that will go local vs [federal](#), devise a regular system for reviewing cases, meet regularly with partners.
- Discuss open investigations in a review process with all partners on a regular basis to share information and foster accountability.



## IMPLEMENT NEW APPROACHES TO WORKING WITH VICTIMS AND WITNESSES

- **Common findings**

- Local law enforcement agencies alone often do not have sufficient resources to address victims' and witnesses' concerns and needs.
- Law enforcement agencies may have options to use controversial victim or witness testimony that they are not currently using.
- Law enforcement agencies face issues with victim and witness cooperation when police-community trust is not strong.

- **Common recommendations**

- Sufficiently fund [witness protection programs](#) or relocation protocols, in collaboration with state and county organizations.
- Record witness interviews, revise witness evidence practices, attempt to incorporate all available witness testimony, and promote support services for witnesses and victims.
- Provide [outreach from investigators](#) to neighborhoods that are experiencing high rates of homicides and NFS incidents, in order to promote [victim-witness safety and cooperation](#), promote public safety, and reduce fear and violence.

### SUBMIT A REQUEST

To request a NFS or homicide investigations assessment for your agency, contact the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) [National Training and Technical Assistance Center \(NTTAC\)](#) at [BJANTTAC@ojp.usdoj.gov](mailto:BJANTTAC@ojp.usdoj.gov).

