

CASE STUDY

WICHITA, KANSAS



In 2019, the US Department of Justice (DOJ) invited Wichita, Kansas, to join the National Public Safety Partnership (PSP). The PSP is a DOJ-wide program which helps participating cities address serious violent crime challenges through coordinated training and technical assistance. The PSP facilitates the development of data-driven, evidence-based strategies tailored to each city's needs. Wichita participated in the PSP program through September 2023.

ABOUT WICHITA

The city of Wichita, known as the heart of Kansas, is home to 396,192 residents, which makes it the most populated city in the state. The city covers an area of 139 square miles. The demographic makeup of the city's residents is 70.6 percent White, 17.6 percent Hispanic or Latino, 10.3 percent Black, and 4.9 percent Asian. Of all Wichita's residents, 15.2 percent live in poverty, with a median household income of \$56,374.¹



The Wichita Police Department (WPD) serves the city of Wichita and is the largest police department in the state of Kansas with six stations (headquarters, central, north, east, south, and west). In 2022, WPD employed over 900 individuals with an authorized 707 sworn and 208 civilian positions.



Prior to joining the PSP in 2019, Wichita had experienced a 16.2 percent surge in violent crimes in 2018 compared to 2017, which significantly exceeded the 5.3 percent statewide increase for Kansas for the same period of time. Specifically, in 2018, Wichita recorded a total of 4,631 violent crimes, including a marked rise in homicides of 37 percent compared with the previous year. Additionally, the increase in aggravated assaults and batteries, which increased by 21.5 percent, exceeded the statewide increase of approximately 7.8 percent, amplifying concerns about the city's safety. Despite having only 13 percent of the state's population, Wichita accounted for 37.5 of the violent crimes and 27.8 percent of the property crimes in Kansas in 2018.

LOCAL AND FEDERAL PARTNERS

WPD had two police chiefs during its PSP engagement, both of whom were very engaged with the PSP. Partnerships with local, state, and federal partners continued and strengthened throughout the PSP. The following agencies and organizations were instrumental in carrying out PSP initiatives:

- Wichita Police Department
- Sedgwick County District Attorney's Office
- McConnell Air Force Base Office of Special Investigations
- Wichita State University (WSU)
- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF)
- Department of Homeland Security
- Drug Enforcement Administration

¹ US Census Bureau, Census Quick Facts, retrieved May 24, 2023, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/wichitacitykansas>

- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- US Attorney's Office, District of Kansas
- United States Marshals Service

NATIONAL PSP PRIORITIES

At the start of its PSP engagement, Wichita identified five areas of focus for its engagement: crime analysis, criminal justice collaboration, gun violence, investigations, and technology. WPD and its partners received technical assistance support from PSP subject matter experts (SMEs) to help enhance these areas.

FEDERAL PARTNERSHIPS

Wichita made notable progress in improving communication and information-sharing practices among law enforcement partners to effectively combat crime. The 2022 PSP Symposium served as a platform for key leaders in law enforcement to meet face-to-face and discuss opportunities for enhancing their operations. Accordingly, the emphasis was on collaboration among all law enforcement partners, as well as the sharing of crime data with other investigating agencies such as probation and parole.

Following PSP peer exchange events and PSP nonfatal shooting technical assistance, the WPD and ATF initiated a biweekly meeting to review shootings. This initiative was modeled after successful practices implemented in Milwaukee, WI, Oakland, CA, and Kansas City, MO (all former PSP sites). During the biweekly meetings, partners review open nonfatal shooting cases that have occurred since the previous meeting, discuss leads, and identify groups or individuals who may retaliate and should be considered for intervention services. The objective of these reviews is to facilitate subsequent investigative and legal actions related to state and federal gun cases. Federal partners actively attend and participate in these shooting reviews, as recommended by PSP. These combined efforts, along with other city-wide initiatives, have contributed to a significant reduction in homicides and nonfatal shootings. Specifically, homicides decreased by 43 percent compared with 2021 and 35 percent compared with 2018. In addition, nonfatal shootings decreased by 48 percent in 2022 compared with 2021, resulting in the lowest nonfatal shooting rate since 2016.

GUN VIOLENCE

In 2019, Wichita received a federal Crime Gun Intelligence Center (CGIC) grant and promptly established a CGIC at the WSU campus. The ATF played a crucial role in ensuring that the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) technicians and firearms examiners in Wichita received adequate training and certification to support the CGIC. By December 2019, Wichita became self-sufficient in operating NIBIN and subsequently extended its services to neighboring law enforcement agencies. Collaborative efforts between WPD, ATF, WSU, and partner agencies enabled the expansion of investigative capabilities, including the allocation of WPD's daytime violent crime response team officers and a record number of task force officers assigned to federal agencies. On June 29, 2022, ATF announced the launch of a CGIC Center for Excellence on the WSU campus. This center will serve as the headquarters for the National Crime Gun Intelligence Governing Board, a national academy for ATF's Intelligence Research Specialists, and a training hub for crime gun intelligence best practices for law enforcement agencies.

EXAMPLES OF TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDED TO THE WICHITA PSP SITE

Technical Assistance

- Crime Analysis
- Grant Landscape
- Nonfatal Shooting
- Prosecution
- Technology
- Detective Function
- Best Practices for Gang Databases

Peer Exchange

- New York CompStat
- Fort Worth and Las Vegas Real Time Crime Center
- FBI National Domestic Communications Assistance Center

Training

- Denver Place Network Investigations
- FBI Cellular Analysis
- International Association of Crime Analysts Conferences
- Social Network Analysis



WPD also took the initiative to design and implement the Operation Save-a-Casing program,² and has assisted several other jurisdictions in implementing similar programs. The program primarily focuses on public education, aiming to help Wichita residents store their firearms safely to prevent them from being stolen and used in future crimes. WPD collaborates with local firearms merchants to raise awareness and provide vehicle storage devices. In 2023, WPD distributed more than 400 firearms vehicle storage lock boxes to Wichita residents.

Furthermore, in June 2021, Wichita began redesigning its CompStat system following a recommendation from PSP. The redesign incorporated more comprehensive problem analysis into the presentations, including a dedicated section to analyze and discuss guns and shootings. During the redesigned CompStat meetings, top-level analyses from the shooting review meetings are presented and discussed.

CRIME ANALYSIS AND TECHNOLOGY

In 2020, PSP helped review WPD's crime analysis capacity, which led to several recommendations regarding unit organization, skill development, process enhancements, and the improvement of analytic products. Since then, WPD's crime analysis unit has made significant improvements in its crime analysis products.

PSP also collaborated with WPD to improve the department's technological capabilities and identify strategies to enhance the acquisition, implementation, and maintenance of technology in support of efforts to combat violent crime. Following the PSP technical assistance, WPD implemented a new records management system and collaborated with a PSP crime analysis SME to revamp automated reports and processes, thereby improving the effectiveness of crime analysis products and capabilities.

In addition, WPD initiated a pilot program involving automatic license plate readers (LPRs). The success of this program led WPD to purchase 55 LPR cameras in 2022, which were deployed across the city. In 2023, a PSP SME returned to Wichita to reexamine the technology capacity and provide guidance on establishing a Real-Time Crime Center to centralize, enhance, and leverage all of WPD's technological capabilities.

INVESTIGATIONS

In mid-2020, Wichita experienced a spike in homicides and aggravated assaults. WPD effectively used crime analysis to determine the main drivers of these incidents, which included gang- or group-related retaliatory shootings and domestic violence. To address these issues, PSP connected WPD with Chula Vista (CA) Police Department to learn about its domestic violence response team. WPD tailored its protocol based on the information gathered from Chula Vista and sought funding to stand up its own domestic violence response team.

In 2020, WPD, with funding from an Office of Community Oriented Policing Services grant, launched a Domestic Intervention and Violence Reduction Team (DIVRT), which conducts enforcement and education to reduce victimization and new domestic violence crimes. DIVRT involves a specialized team of law enforcement officers dedicated to responding to and managing domestic violence cases. The DIVRT program is a multi-faceted approach, which includes immediate response to domestic violence incidents, thorough investigations, and the provision of necessary resources and assistance to victims. There were more than 150 outstanding felony pickups at the start of DIVRT. Currently, there are less than 20. Domestic violence clearance rates jumped 10 percent, even in 2020. Two bureau-wide special assignments were conducted in 2021 with community-based advocacy groups that proactively followed up with victims at their residence. Misdemeanor domestic violence arrests are down 9 percent compared with the five-year average.

DIVRT RESULTS

SEPTEMBER 2020 – NOVEMBER 2021³

- 373 people have been arrested
- 73 proactive no-contact violation arrests have been made
- 31 firearms have been seized

² Wichita Police Department Operation Save-A-Casing, FAQs • What is Operation Save-A-Casing? (wichita.gov)

³ <https://www.kake.com/story/45152070/wichitas-divert-program-making-a-difference-in-battle-against-domestic-violence>

In fall 2020, WPD initiated a 90-day Major Crime Reduction Team operation, pulling in resources from across the department to focus and expand enforcement and community engagement efforts related to gun violence. In 2021, Wichita law enforcement and community partners launched the Wichita Ceasefire Initiative, called SERV (Strategic Engagement to Reduce Violence), for young people at high risk of violent crime involvement. The crime analysis unit uses an individual's criminal record, engagement in prior shootings, and related criteria to choose individuals for the program. Each person is assigned a score based on their involvement in the incident, and these scores are aggregated to determine eligibility for the SERV initiative. Once selected, participants are provided streamlined access to services, including employment assistance, educational opportunities, and drug or substance abuse programs. Additional services center around mentorship and direction.

GRANTS LANDSCAPE REVIEW

In spring 2020, PSP conducted a thorough review of WPD's capacity for grants. This review led to significant outcomes, including WPD hiring an experienced law enforcement grants coordinator in 2021. This coordinator's primary objective is to develop an organizational strategy that will enhance the department's capacity to identify, secure, and manage grants and funding specifically dedicated to the reduction of violent crime.

The following grants were successfully secured following grants landscape assistance from PSP.

Table 1. Grants awarded to Wichita following PSP grant assistance.

Funding Year	Grant	Amount of Support
2021	Project Safe Neighborhoods	\$167,483
2022	Crime Gun Intelligence Training and Education	\$1,319,560
2022	Project Safe Neighborhoods	\$168,085

IMPACT ON VIOLENT CRIME

Wichita recorded a significant reduction in homicides and nonfatal shootings throughout 2022. Specifically, in 2022, homicides decreased 43 percent compared with 2021 and 35 percent when compared with 2018. In addition, nonfatal shootings decreased 48 percent in 2022 compared with 2021, marking the lowest nonfatal shooting rate since 2016. Violent crime statistics for Wichita between 2017 and 2022 can be seen in Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 2. Wichita violent crime data (2017–2022)

Year	Population	Violent Crime	Homicide	Rape	Robbery	Aggravated Assault
2017	389,902	3,031	35	417	624	1,955
2018	390,591	3,287	35	441	595	2,216
2019	389,938	3,156	35	420	477	2,224
2020	397,532	3,941	55	436	488	2,962
2021	392,643	3,806	47	425	464	2,870
2022	394,286	3,438	31	423	423	2603

(Source: Wichita Police Department, 2023.)

Table 3. Wichita shooting data (2017–2022)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Nonfatal	119	139	115	153	207	115
Fatal	25	25	26	45	33	22
Total	144	164	141	198	240	136

(Source: Wichita Police Department, 2023.)

KEY LESSONS FOR SUCCESS

PSP point of contact. Having the right point of contact (POC) for PSP is crucial. The Wichita POC was responsive and attentive, and his direct access to the chiefs generally resulted in the rapid adoption of recommended improvements to relevant operations. Changes in leadership sometimes slow down the implementation of PSP recommendations because the new chief's priorities may not align with the previous chief's PSP priorities. Retaining the right POC for PSP can mitigate this problem and keep PSP priorities on course.

Commitment to collaboration. During the PSP engagement, several law enforcement failures in other parts of the nation fueled disorder in Wichita and elsewhere. WPD was able to respond successfully because of its prior commitment to maintaining strong connections with community groups and leaders pre-crisis. Much work had been done, but WPD sought PSP assistance in identifying successful outreach programs elsewhere and learned from them.