

# PSP Guide to Social Network Analysis

**Social Network Analysis (SNA) is a tool frequently used by law enforcement to visualize relationships into social structures to be shared as intelligence to better inform crime prevention and intervention efforts.**

SNA provides a systematic approach for investigating large amounts of data on social interactions and connections between individuals and groups and is often used to identify important individuals in criminal networks who are key players in driving violence in a community (e.g., drug or human trafficking, terrorism, and street gangs). Data collected from field interviews, arrest reports, traffic stops, street intelligence, gang intelligence reports, National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) hits, group audits, and information from interviews and informants can inform SNA by connecting relationships and social interactions between two or more people.

Manual examination of this data is often challenging, time consuming, and prone to error. Using SNA as a crime analysis tool can help streamline the process of identifying priority individuals and places to direct crime prevention and intervention efforts.

**SNA  
is the analysis  
of social  
relationships, not  
to be confused  
with social  
media or social  
networking.**

on the very small percentage of people who commit the majority of the crime. The training is rooted in sustainability principles, giving the participating agencies the necessary tools to continue using analysis for operational purposes after their initial engagement with the subject experts concludes.

PSP combines analytics and field intelligence through the SNA Initiative, which is supported by subject experts Dr. Andrew Fox and Chief Joseph McHale. The SNA Initiative involves the delivery of training and technical assistance (TTA) to intelligence and operational police department personnel as well as agency crime analysts. Its goal is to impart the analytical skills necessary to conduct SNA in conjunction with operational planning and strategy to use analysis for violence reduction. According to Chief McHale, SNA can also improve community relationships by concentrating law enforcement resources

*"SNA provides law enforcement commanders pinpoint intelligence on the social relationships that drive criminal activity."*

—Chief Joseph McHale,  
Subject Expert

# Social Network Analysis

(continued from reverse side)

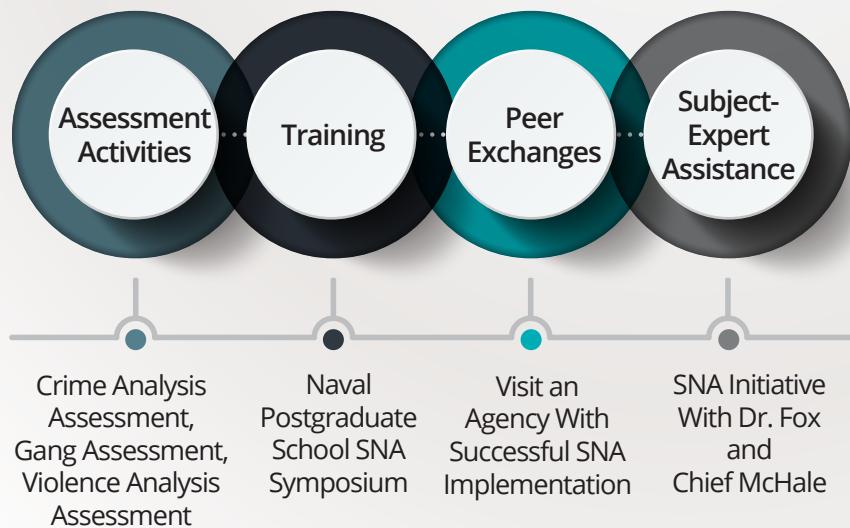
*"We are learning that violence spreads throughout networks similar to the way diseases spread. SNA can help agencies interrupt the spread of violence."*

—Dr. Andrew Fox,  
Subject Expert

The Flint, Michigan, and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, PSP Operations sites participated in the first cohort of the SNA Initiative in 2017. The Little Rock, Arkansas; Newark, New Jersey; and Nashville, Tennessee sites participated in the second cohort in 2018. Each of these sites was provided with training covering an introduction to SNA, how it has been and can be used for law enforcement operations, and challenges of implementation. Crime analysts participated in intensive hands-on learning with specific SNA software tools. Each site also develops an SNA Surge Operation plan to execute over six months. This plan includes the identification of a target area, data requirements, goals, key personnel, and a timeline of activities and next steps.

PSP also supports sites in developing SNA skills through participation in the Naval Postgraduate School SNA Symposium, held annually in Monterey, California. This symposium covers topics such as the importance of SNA and its use and application in law enforcement settings, addressing "dark" networks (gangs, terrorist, human trafficking), and how to develop partnerships to support advanced analysis in law enforcement agencies. The topics and focus of the symposium are complementary to the SNA Initiative TTA.

Below is a path that PSP sites might take in developing SNA capabilities in their agencies, depending on existing capabilities and needs:



## For More Information

- Utilizing Social Network Analysis to Reduce Violent Crime
- Social Network Analysis: A Systematic Approach for Investigating
- Reducing Homicides Using Social Network Analysis
- A Guide to Peer Exchanges

*"SNA allows agencies to use data they already have to intervene in crime networks in a more comprehensive and strategic way."*

—Dr. Andrew Fox,  
Subject Expert

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