



THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
**COMMUNITY SAFETY
LEADERSHIP ACADEMIES**

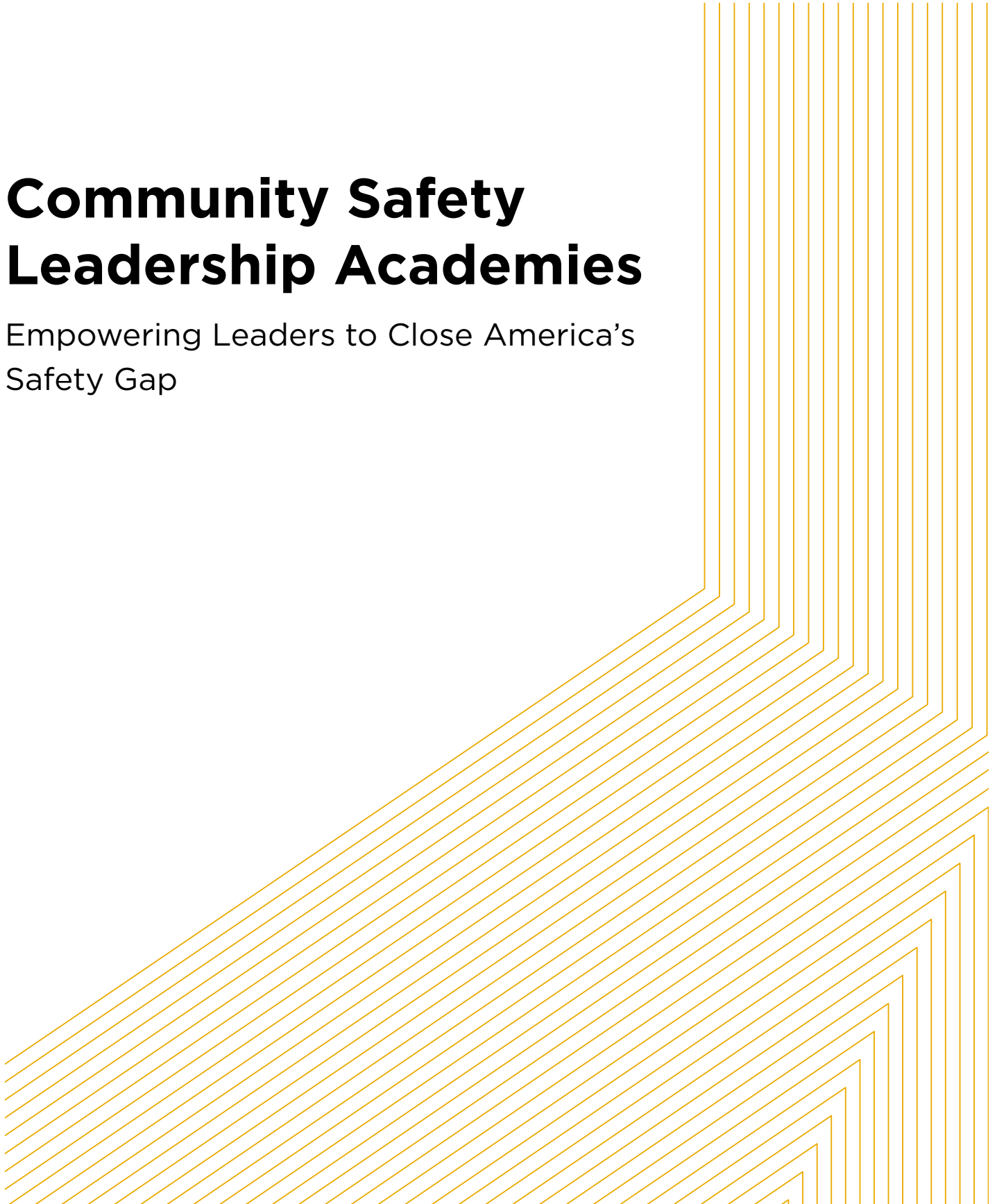
Harris School of Public Policy



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CHICAGO

Community Safety Leadership Academies

Empowering Leaders to Close America's
Safety Gap



THE CHALLENGE

American cities are in crisis. In 2020 we witnessed the largest nationwide rise in murders in 50 years. At least 12 major U.S. cities set homicide records. The result has been a widening of disparities in gun violence victimization over the last few years, with increasingly severe burdens on communities of color. For good reason, we spend a lot of time talking about widening income inequality in America. We spend much less time taking about widening inequality in something even more fundamental: safety.

It goes without saying that improving overall public safety and closing these safety gaps will require long-term, sustained investments to address 'root causes'—improving education, reducing poverty, and eliminating segregation. But in the short-term, the day-to-day work of saving lives



Pritzker Director of the University of Chicago Crime Lab Jens Ludwig speaks at the Community Safety Leadership Academies launch event.

falls primarily to two sectors of front-line first responders that must shoulder the load: police and community violence intervention (CVI) organizations. Unfortunately, for different reasons, neither sector has been able to capitalize on advances in data-driven management practices that have transformed many other sectors, for example medicine and technology. As a result, neither has been able to deliver as much social good per dollar spent as our cities need.

THE OPPORTUNITY

In response, we have launched the University of Chicago Community Safety Leadership Academies (CSLA).

The CSLA offer first-of-their kind programs to train the next generation of policing and CVI leaders from across America—with the goal of having national impact—and are being rigorously evaluated. This effort brings together data and behavioral science insights of top academics at one of the world's leading research institutions along with our nation's leading safety practitioners who have a demonstrated track record of real-world success. The Academies run simultaneously and with complementary curricula, focusing on the transformational impact leadership and management can have, aiming to be the most impactful public safety trainings ever offered in the United States.

The world is in the middle of a data-driven management revolution. The private sector has recognized there is enormous leverage in both incorporating data and technology into their operations and decision-making, and in investing in human capital development for managers and future leaders to be able to capitalize on these advances. This has even been true in parts of the public sector: the U.S. Department of Defense invests tens of millions of dollars a year to send its officers to get advanced degrees from the best universities in the country because they believe this will improve output from the department's \$700 billion per year total budget. And in education, the late Eli Broad recently donated \$100 million to the Yale School of Management to establish a management academy for principals and school leaders to improve output from front-line teachers and staff.

This is very much not the case in policing or in CVI, which suggests that such a shift could produce far more and better (and fairer) outputs from existing police and CVI resources. For example, new research from the University of Chicago suggests that improved leadership can change violent crime rates and police use of force by as much as 35% or more. Unfortunately, because most police departments invest so little in developing their future managers and leaders, they are foregoing large potential improvements by operating as they did in the 1970s (or in some ways, as in the 1870s).

The data-driven management revolution has bypassed the CVI field for a very different set of reasons. The Biden Administration's recent announcement of support for the CVI field of \$5 billion represents the first time the federal government has made a significant investment in this sector.

The CSLA draws on the best data, behavioral science insights, and learnings from the field to offer curricula focused on bringing the leadership and management practices of policing and community violence interventions into the twenty-first century.

But this represents still a modest amount compared to the \$307 billion the US spends a year on the criminal justice system. It is no wonder the CVI sector's infrastructure for leadership training is underdeveloped when the field, as a whole, despite its promise, has received such limited funding for such a long time.

We also believe that leadership training provides a unique opportunity for having impact at national scale. The history of social policy is of social programs that fail to scale either because the resources to greatly expand operations are not available, or the policies themselves cannot be replicated with fidelity when scale increases by a factor of 100 or 1,000 or 10,000. But leadership training provides an opportunity to transform the public safety environment in an entire city with the training of literally not more than a few handfuls of key people. The ability of leaders to change what large numbers of other people in their organizations are doing, day after day, year after year, is the leverage that helps turn modest philanthropic investments into outsized impact. Nor do we need to transform many cities to have national impact: fully 50% of all murders in a typical year in the US occur in just 100 cities.

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THE PLAN

Composed of both the Policing Leadership Academy and the CVI Leadership Academy, the CSLA draws on the best data, behavioral science insights, and learnings from the field to offer curricula focused on bringing the leadership and management practices of policing and CVI into the 21st Century.

While the two Academies have separate staff and curricula, they were launched together; it is critical that these two sectors—out on the front lines of American cities each day—be seen as the complementary efforts they truly are and trained with the same comprehensive focus on leadership and management to achieve their shared goal: community safety.

The CVI Leadership Academy

While community-based gun violence intervention programs have operated for over two decades, several factors have spurred increased urgency to expand the capacity and effectiveness of the sector, including the recent surge in gun violence, the failure of a law enforcement-only approach to keep communities safe, and promising evidence that CVI programs can be effective. Randomized controlled trials of CVI programs like Youth Guidance's Becoming a Man, Choose 2 Change by Children's Home + Aid and YAP, and Heartland Alliance's READI Chicago provide policymakers with promising new options for preventing gun violence in the first place.

Over the last few years, a group of CVI leaders from across the country—working under the umbrella of Fund Peace—collaborated on efforts to mobilize investments into the CVI field. These leaders then partnered to develop the CVI Leadership Academy at CSLA to support the next generation of CVI leaders.¹

Over six months and drawing on the expertise of leaders and the lessons learned through evidenced-based CVI programs such as READI Chicago, the CVI Leadership Academy helps prepare the next generation of CVI leaders on issues like staff management and retention, data use, program administration, and innovation.

The Policing Leadership Academy

The Policing Leadership Academy is led by policing experts from around the country with a proven history of having radically transformed departments to increase public safety effectiveness and fairness. The program offers a multidisciplinary curriculum that spans six months. Students apply knowledge from the behavioral, organizational, and sociological sciences to become stronger leaders and advance effective evidence-based practices within their organizations. Students also complete a capstone project, developed in partnership with their department's leadership, as part of the PLA curriculum.

We are optimistic about this approach because of evidence from two of our partner cities: Over the last 30 years in New York City, murder rates plummeted by 83% while incarceration declined simultaneously. In Los Angeles, murder rates dropped by 64% while community support for the police (as reported on surveys) fully doubled. Many criminologists attribute a sizable share of these gains to professionalization of these departments with better training, better management systems, better accountability, and data-driven decision making. But these agencies are outliers among the over 14,000 local police departments in the U.S. The Policing Academy at CSLA helps train police leaders from around the country on how to learn from and improve upon this success.

The University of Chicago Crime Lab has a long history of rigorous evaluation, and we bring that expertise to bear in assessing the impact of this effort to generate insights that can drive large-scale progress. To test the effectiveness of the Policing Leadership Academy, researchers at the Crime Lab and Cornell University Jeb E. Brooks School of Public Policy are conducting a multi-city, randomized controlled trial to measure the impact of investing in the leadership and management skills of police leaders on both community safety and the harms of policing. The CVI Leadership Academy curriculum is also being evaluated with the goal of elevating lessons learned to train CVI leaders at scale.

FUNDING

We are grateful to Ken Griffin and Michael Sacks who have provided generous seed funding to launch this initiative. Our goal is to provide training for free to the initial cohorts of participants (with outside philanthropic support) to generate 'proof of concept' evidence about the transformative impact of improving local front-line leadership capacity. Our hope is that such evidence would then eventually lead to federal government support to sustain this impact in perpetuity.

LEARN MORE

For more information about CSLA, please visit our website at crimelab.uchicago.edu/projects/community-safety-leadership-academies.

ENDNOTES

1. The CVI Leadership Academy's Founding Steering Committee includes:

- Shani Buggs, Ph.D., M.P.H, Assistant Professor with the Violence Prevention Research Program at the University of California Davis;
- Dr. Antonio Cediell, Managing Director of Live Free USA;
- Erica Ford, CEO and Founder of LIFE Camp;
- Marcus McAllister, a national violence prevention expert;
- Pastor Michael McBride, Executive Director of Live Free USA;
- David Muhammad, Executive Director of the National Institute for Criminal Justice Reform;
- Oresa Napper-Williams, Executive Director of Not Another Child;
- Anthony Smith, Executive Director of Cities United.