

Office of Violence Prevention  
**ANNUAL REPORT 2023**

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**NEBRASKA**

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**COMMISSION ON LAW ENFORCEMENT  
AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

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## Introduction

The Director of the Office of Violence Prevention of the Nebraska Commission of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice is responsible for generating an annual report on the Office of Violence Prevention programs in Nebraska-by-Nebraska Revised Statute § 81-1450. This 2022 report is fulfilling this statutory duty.

The primary responsibility of the State Office of Violence Prevention is to help develop, foster, promote, and assess statewide violence prevention programs in the State of Nebraska.

The Office of Violence Prevention (OVP) aids privately funded organizations, local government subdivisions, and other community groups in developing Prevention, Intervention, and Enforcement theories and techniques.

Through a competitive grants process administered by the Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice (Crime Commission), the Office of Violence Prevention awards \$591,000 annually to organizations in Nebraska that have shown a history of documented success or new programs which show promise in helping to reduce violent crime in Nebraska.

The grant recipients are required to develop goals, objectives, and performance indicators to help evaluate the success of the financial distribution. Upon awarding of the funds, grantees are required to submit quarterly activity and cash reports to the Office of Violence Prevention/Crime Commission. Also, grantees are required to provide an evaluation report and a portion of the grant funds can be used for a professional evaluator. The report must provide a comprehensive review of the program's overall effort and measurable results during the grant cycle. Those results are provided to the Office of Violence Prevention

## The Office of Violence Prevention Advisory Council

In May of 2009, the Nebraska Legislature passed LB 63, establishing the Office of Violence Prevention within the Nebraska Crime Commission. A provision within LB 63 provided for the establishment of the Advisory Council to the Office of Violence Prevention. The Governor appointed Advisory Council is to meet quarterly and is directed to recommend – to the Crime Commission -- rules and regulations regarding fundraising, program evaluation, coordination of programs, and criteria used to assess and award funds to violence prevention programs.

### **The current board consists of:**

Brenda Beadle

Karen Bredthauer

Scott Sasse

Tyler Cooper

## Program Priority Focus

The purpose of these funds is to address street and gang violence, homicides, and injuries caused by firearms as outlined in LB63 in 2009 (N.R.S. §81-1447 through 1451). In March 2015, the Nebraska

Legislature passed LB 167 which also included the creation of youth employment opportunities in high-crime areas as an additional priority focus. The Legislature found that to effectively address these issues, communities must develop a multi-faceted approach that includes violence prevention activities, intervention, enforcement, and rehabilitation. Priority for funding is given to communities and organizations seeking to implement violence prevention programs that appear to have the greatest benefit to the state, and which have, as goals one of the three identified purpose areas.

1. Reduction of street or gang violence
2. Reduction of homicides and injuries caused by firearms
3. Youth Employment opportunities in high-crime areas

To be eligible **for this specific application** for Office of Violence Prevention funding, the applicant must be one of the following:

- Community-Based Agencies or Organizations, including Faith-Based Organizations.
- Community team.
- State Agency.
- Unit of local government (i.e., city, county, town)
- School District
- Federally or State recognized Native American Tribe
- 501(c)(3) Non-Profit Organization

Applicants without 501(c)(3) status must seek out an eligible applicant listed above to apply on their behalf as the fiscal agent.

## OVP Updates

The SFY 2024 Solicitation cycle granted a total of \$548,094.

Paul Zeiger assumed the responsibility of the Office of Violence Prevention Director role effective September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023.

## SFY 2024 Grantees

### SFY 2024 Solicitation

Grantee	Program Name	Location	Award Amount
Chicano Awareness Center	Healing Circulos: Leadership development for young women in South Omaha	Omaha	\$47950
City of Lincoln	Operation Tipping Point	Lincoln	\$66948
City Of Omaha	OPD Firearms DNA Testing	Omaha	\$20000
Completely Kids	Teen Employment Program	Omaha	\$44033
Douglas County Sheriff's Office	DSCO Deputy Problem-Solving Court Liaison	Omaha	\$88151
Empowerment Network	AAEN Omaha 260 VIP and Stepup Omaha	Omaha	\$31680
Girls Inc.	Success Prep	Omaha	\$27000
Greater Omaha Attendance and Learning Services	Family Advocate Program	Omaha	\$27907
Hall County	Hall County JDAI	Grand Island	\$96833
Hope Center for Kids, Inc.	Village Basketball Alliance	Omaha	\$32654
Metropolitan Community College	Youth Forward Program	Omaha	\$32469
Northstar Foundation	Northstar Foundation	Omaha	\$32469

### Chicano Awareness Center

Healing Círculos focuses on primary prevention by providing voluntary services. The program engages students with attendance problems before system involvement. That said, adjudicated youth are also eligible if referred for attendance or other school problems. The program relies on partnering schools to help in the early identification of risk factors, primarily chronic truancy, poor academic performance, and behavior problems in school. Because educators are positioned to know their students well and to collect data related to these risk factors, they are ideal partners in helping the Latino Center intervene early, well before adjudication becomes necessary. Students are referred to Healing Círculos by school administrators, counselors, Latino Center Student Advocates, juvenile justice system professionals, and community-based partner agencies. We also have self-referrals from students and their parents or guardians. Referrals are based on risk factors such as chronic truancy, lack of pro-social involvement, absence of parental involvement, lack of self-regulation, and disengagement in school and the community. Students meet on a weekly basis during the school year in a facilitated group setting to

build a positive value system and address issues regarding risky behaviors. Groups are divided by gender with the young women participating in Xochikalli and young men participating in Ollin. A grant from the Office of Violence Prevention would specifically fund a Xochikalli Facilitator, who would serve at least 64 young women and girls during the one-year grant. This position is currently unfilled; the OVP grant would help the program significantly increase the number of girls and young women it serves, helping to address a need for culturally fluent, gender-specific services. Typical group sizes are 10 to 15 youth, with the ideal being 12. In addition to the weekly group sessions, students meet monthly for outings and service-learning opportunities, where they learn more about their community's needs and build group cohesion through pro-social activities. These service learning and other group outings continue in the summer when school is not in session.

### City of Lincoln

Operation Tipping Point (OTP) focuses on working directly with youth, ages 11-17, who are at risk of gang affiliation within Lancaster County. Operation Tipping Point has more than 20 community partners (including a direct partnership with 17 Lincoln Public Schools) and justice stakeholders. OTP addresses the increasingly violent crimes associated with gangs through intervention/prevention strategies. A full-time Gang Outreach Specialist serves as a link between primary and secondary prevention/intervention efforts and the engagement of community partners. The Gang Outreach Specialist is located within the Lincoln Police Department Gang Unit.

### City of Omaha

Gang and gun-related violent crime is a persistent problem in the Omaha metro area that devastates the lives of victims, their families, and the community at large. While there have been incredible strides made in decreasing gang and gun-related violent crime in recent years, especially in comparison with recent national trends, much more needs to be accomplished. DNA evidence from seized and recovered firearms is a critical tool to identify and apprehend suspects, provide conclusive evidence for linking suspects to criminal weapons offenses, bolster the odds of conviction, and increase the likelihood that swift and severe sanctions will be levied against the perpetrators of gun violence. These efforts help OPD to remove violent repeat offenders from the community and decrease gang and gun-related crime over time.

### Completely Kids

Completely KIDS' Teen Employment Program (TEP) provides workforce development, professionalism training, goal setting and attainment, and employment opportunities for high school students in central Omaha. TEP provides participating young people with a healthy afterschool environment and equips them with workforce development skills and on-the-job training to improve their chances of successful education and long-term employment. For youth engaged in the program, TEP reduces the potential for them to succumb to peer pressure and be involved in unhealthy behaviors and street violence.

TEP will engage 25 students with ongoing mentoring and training in professional skills, and developing their leadership, planning, confidence, and other areas for success in the workforce and their future careers. Participating teens, in turn, work as Completely KIDS staff to provide vital afterschool enrichment activities to younger children at schools and community sites. TEP students work directly with Completely KIDS' senior staff to receive guidance and on-the-job training. Students attend educational workshops in areas such as resume-building and conflict management. Lastly, mentor meetings serve to guide teens towards goal attainment in academics, career, and social-emotional skills-building.

## Douglas County Sheriff's Office

The Douglas County Sheriff's Office (DCSO) continues to incorporate community-based policing in its operation. In addition to the Problem-Solving Deputy Liaison, the DCSO includes a more robust community mental health focus through the funding of a co-responder clinician, a dedicated behavioral health/wellness unit led by a credentialed behavioral health sergeant, increased deputies operating out of local schools, and proposed evening investigation and surveillance initiatives. Additionally, deputies are staffing the county's new Juvenile Justice Center. The DCSO Deputy Problem-Solving Court Liaison will work with the above staff and resources and act as an information pipeline between the courts and law enforcement. As a result, each entity has access to knowledge the other may not. In addition, repeated data indicates a law enforcement presence as part of a problem-solving team decreases criminal recidivism. Youth in the problem-solving court system may be involved or close to involvement with gang membership. At the Young Adult Court level, the minor may exhibit the first signs of risk factors that make them more likely to join gangs. These behaviors may include delinquency, aggression, violence, alcohol and drug use, mental health problems, and victimization. The risk factors function in a cumulative fashion – the larger the number of risk factors, the greater the likelihood of a negative outcome, such as joining a gang. (Howell, J. C. (2011). *Gang Prevention: An Overview of Research and Programs*. United States: DIANE Publishing Company. The challenge for the problem-solving court team is what actions will prevent the membership or terminate the activity in its early stages. By its very nature, the problem-solving court focuses on prevention and support through case management and therapeutic jurisprudence that addresses the underlying issues surrounding a youth justice case and provides treatment alternatives to incarceration.

## Empowerment Network

Build on the successes of the organization and accelerate the pace of positive change by expanding Step-Up Omaha! which is one of the key initiatives. STEP-UP OMAHA! recruits, prepares, and places Omaha youth and young adults aged 14 to 21, in mutually beneficial paid summer jobs and work experience opportunities. Since 2008, the Empowerment Network partners have connected 7,500 youth and young adults to career exploration, jobs, and internships. Participants have gained valuable paid work experience in careers including, but not limited to: health, technology, construction, culinary arts, banking, hospitality, education, manufacturing, retail, service, transportation, entrepreneurship, and others. They have worked in non-profits, small businesses, governmental agencies, and Fortune 500 companies.

## Girls Inc.

Girls Inc. After Hours will offer a safe space for underserved teen girls to engage in healthy, pro-social activities during high-risk evening hours. During this time, girls will take part in sports and fitness activities, access Girls Inc.'s media lab for homework or STEM projects, and socialize in a flexible, comfortable environment designed specifically for girls.

Girls Inc. After Hours will take place primarily from 6:00-10:00 p.m. Monday-Friday throughout the year. Each day, after Girls Inc.'s regular out-of-school-time programming, concludes and the younger girls go home, the North Omaha Katherine Fletcher Center will remain open for teens in need of a safe place. By offering this fun, flexible program in which teens can feel ownership and independence, Girls Inc. can help to reduce girls' engagement with risky behaviors that could lead them to the juvenile justice system.

## Goals Center

The purpose of the Family Advocate Program is to provide support to students and their families when absenteeism becomes a concern. Family Advocates provide an intensive case management system for students when school districts have exceeded their resources. In Traditional Services, Family Advocates work with students and their families on average for 6 to 12 months to ensure that a family has the resources and skills needed to continue to support their student's regular school attendance. In the Engagement Outreach tract, Family Advocates work to re-engage students in school so that districts can implement their interventions therefore the length of service is generally between 60 and 120 days. Family Advocates collaborate with families by providing evidence-based assessments, and service plans that identify areas of strength and need within the families, assessments are completed at regular intervals and service plans are reviewed monthly. With a multi-disciplinary, multi-agency, team approach, the program can provide comprehensive assessments, identify school barriers, and deliver interventions and services to students and families. Family Advocates, who are each assigned to specific students and families, provide supportive services via 1-1 meetings with students, parents, and school staff. These meetings focus on problematic areas, strengths, and progress toward goals. Assessments (i.e., the Ohio Scales, and North Carolina Family Assessment Scales) are used at intake and regular intervals thereafter to assess student and parent strengths, needs, and satisfaction. Collaboratively with caregivers, students, and community resource providers, an individualized service plan is developed for each student along with their family that incorporates assessment results and outlines specific goals and strategies. Family Advocates regularly review this plan with the student and caregiver and monitor progress regarding attendance. As alternate needs arise, Family Advocates work to connect families to community-based resources that can provide additional support. Family Advocates provide regular reports and updates to the schools and the families regarding progress and areas of need

## Hall County

The mission of Hall County's Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI) is to establish a more effective and efficient juvenile detention system. JDAI relies on eight core evidence-based strategies to engage in juvenile justice reform: Community Collaboration; Data Driven Decisions; Objective Admissions; Community-based Detention Alternatives; Case Processing Reform; Special Detention Cases; Reducing Racial & Ethnic Disparities; and Conditions of Confinement. The JDAI Program through the Annie E. Casey Foundation focuses on a framework of four strategies to reduce youth incarceration. The framework calls for juvenile justice systems to significantly and safely reduce the number of youths sent to court-ordered out-of-home placements, reform the standard of care so youths can realize their potential, replace youths' detention with more effective approaches, and reinvest savings into community-based alternatives. These strategies are further focused on race equity, specifically on youths of color, because they are the youths that are most likely to be placed in detention.

Hall County's JDAI has been in the planning stage for over a year, born out of Hall County's Through the Eyes of a Child group. Hall County committed to participate in the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI) and engaged in the JDAI community assessment. Key community stakeholders have been interviewed as part of this assessment to improve community-based juvenile detention alternatives, expand services, build capacity, and explore, develop, and implement new services. UN-Omaha's Juvenile Justice Institute (JJI) completed Hall County's Detention Utilization Study which includes conclusions and recommendations based on the study's results. Hall County's Commissioners voted to support the JDAI



Coordinator's position during the 06/21/2022 meeting. Implementation of JDAI in Hall County will leap forward once the coordinator is hired, trained, and begins their focused attention on the Initiative.

### Hope Center for Kids

The Village Basketball Alliance was formed through collaborative work of Omaha 360 community partners over a decade ago. The original intention was to provide a community basketball league where young people from different neighborhoods in North Omaha, who may not have positive interactions were they to encounter one another on the streets, could have positive, healthy competition with the support of caring adult role models. Men aged 14 and older, some served by various community organizations and Omaha 360 partners, have come together weekly for athletic competition since 2011, made possible by VBA, hosted at the Hope Center for Kids and The Schenzel Community Center (formerly Hope Skate). The Hope Center for Kids offers VBA as an alternative to criminal activities that often take place in the out-of-school hours when youth are not a part of extracurricular activities. Jr. VBA focuses on youth still in their school years (ages 14-19), while VBA's reach includes youth and young adults. Village Basketball Alliance is a preventative program that works to keep youth and young adults away from criminal activities. Omaha has long experienced issues with gangs and violent crimes that are often more pronounced by economic disparities and unemployment. Unemployment and poverty are contributors to higher crime rates. Violent crimes affect the offenders, the families, community residents, service providers, and the city of Omaha as a whole.

### Metropolitan Community College

Youth Forward Program (YFP) is a new program designed to meet the needs of at-risk youth involved with the juvenile justice system, a highly marginalized cohort that faces biases and barriers preventing them from living productive and healthy lives. YFP will cultivate safe spaces at select Omaha Public Schools (OPS) high schools to help connect justice-involved youth to academic and career success through mentorship and over 100 credit and non-credit program opportunities at Metropolitan Community College (MCC). Programming will incorporate blended education and training, access to meaningful career exploration and paid work experiences, job placement, relationships with caring adults, transition planning into postsecondary training or education, and wraparound support to remain on track and succeed. A range of incentives will be provided to students to help them remain focused and on track to high school graduation and postsecondary education and training.

### NorthStar Foundation

NorthStar will enhance and expand its comprehensive sequence of athletic engagement and outreach programming for low-income, at-risk male youth in North Omaha in 2023-24. The research-tested model of targeted team sports outreach deployed by the AEOP has an established track record of reinforcing the engagement of participants in NorthStar's broader extended learning time (ELT) model and increasing their protective factors against violent gang involvement. The requested OVP funding will be singularly vital for 2023-24 AEOP delivery: ensuring the use of family-centered and culturally responsive interventions, furnishing linkages to external school- and community-based behavioral health providers, and building longitudinal case coordination to support the resilience and success of NorthStar boys in need.

## Program Site Visits

By the strategic plan, the OVP Director began conducting program site visits of the grantees. The purpose of the site visit is to further the relationship between the Office of Violence Prevention and the grant recipients. The Director can witness the program environment, speak with program participants, and gain insight into future funding needs.

All sites are required to have a site visit before the end of the fiscal year (June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023).

### 2023 Site Visits

Grantee	Date of Site Visit	Comments
Banister Academy (SFY2023 Grantee)	01/14/2023	Athena Sherman attended a site visit at the North Platte satellite location. It was an evening program where the teen mentors assisted in running an evening for children ages 5-12 dedicated to the Banister Academy curriculum.
Completely Kids (SFY2023 Grantee)	02/10/2023	Athena Sherman attended an evening site visit to see the teen employment program participants receive an educational seminar about finances.
PACE (SFY 2023 Grantee)	02/18/2023	Athena Sherman attended a weekend volleyball tournament to watch the program participants actively engage in the program.
GOALS (SFY2023 Grantee)	04/04/2023	Athena Sherman met with the administrative staff at the Goals Center office in Omaha. This site visit gave a comprehensive explanation of their program.
LPD (SFY 2023 Grantee)	4/11/2023	Athena Sherman met the administrative staff at the LPD office in downtown Lincoln. She attended a site visit of Irving Middle School with the Operation Tipping Point POC. The LPD staff gave a comprehensive presentation on the program.
Completely Kids (SFY 2024 Grantee)	9/8/2023	Athena Sherman attended an evening site visit to see the teen employment program participants receive an education seminar about self-advocacy. Christine Carlile (Crime Commission Staff) was in attendance as well. We met with the administrative staff to discuss OVP updates and financial review expectations.