

NEEDLE-MOVING COLLABORATIVES THREE-YEAR FOLLOW-UP

Memphis, TN

Focus areas: Violent/youth crime. Tracked metrics include overall violent crime rate.

Founding date: 2005

Leadership (backbone): Memphis Shelby Crime Commission

Results at time of 2012 study: From 2006 to 2011, the violent crime rate decreased by 27 percent.

Most recent results: From 2011 to 2014, the violent crime rate increased by 8 percent (nonetheless, a net 18 percent decrease from 2006 to 2014).

Memphis's experience over the last three years: In 2012, on the heels of a substantial multiyear drop in violent crime and property crime, the Memphis Shelby Crime Commission and its Operation Safe Community initiative (OSC) developed a new five-year plan that incorporated a stronger focus on youth violence prevention and intervention. The initiative described the plan as “a robust blend of sanctions and support, including evidence-based services prenatal through career age, proven to support positive youth development.” Among its ambitious goals is a 25 percent reduction in violence by youth under age 24.

Recently, OSC has faced headwinds, including rising rates of youth violence, funding challenges, the merger of the city and county school districts, and changes in political leadership. “When there is new leadership,” said Michelle Fowlkes, executive director of the Memphis Shelby Crime Commission, “individuals do not pick up where the previous leader left off. So there is a pause, a transition. We need to make sure we have the right people at the table and continually revisit that.” According to Fowlkes, real progress will require more resources and a better allocation of mental health, juvenile justice, education, and mentoring services.

“We are learning how complex the issues surrounding youth violence really are, and that on all fronts solutions require a comprehensive approach engaging multidisciplinary sectors.”

MICHELLE FOWLKES, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
MEMPHIS SHELBY CRIME COMMISSION