

To: Members of the President's Council on UVA-Community Partnerships
Members of the Community Safety Working Group

From: The Community Safety Implementation Group
President Jim Ryan

Subject: Response and Next Steps re: the Community Safety Working Group Report

Thank you for the Community Safety Working Group's report and recommendations. We appreciate your dedication to strengthening community safety in our region and your commitment to leveraging existing resources and services for the betterment of our local community. Upon reviewing the report and its recommendations, we are pleased to express our support for the outlined strategies. The comprehensive approach outlined by the Community Safety Working Group aligns with our shared goal of enhancing community safety and well-being.

We acknowledge and endorse the four broad recommendations put forth by the Community Safety Working Group:

1. Create protective community environments.
2. Enhance place-based programming and access to care.
3. Improve coordination and information flow among community members, service providers, schools, and law enforcement.
4. Connect youth to caring adults and activities.

The President's Council metrics committee will be reviewing and sharing key data points to track overall progress related to the following key questions.

1. Are rates of violent crime decreasing in Charlottesville City and Albemarle County?
2. Are rates of chronic absenteeism decreasing in Charlottesville City and Albemarle County Schools?
3. Are the youth in Charlottesville City and Albemarle County engaging in prevention and intervention supports?

Progress has already been made in several areas identified as crucial by the working group. This work has taken place across and between the city, county, and University. We applaud these efforts.

In particular, to ensure an ongoing commitment to community safety, and in response to the recommendations of the Community Safety Working Group, UVA has assembled human and capital resources in the [UVA Gun Violence Solutions Project \(GVSP\)](#). The GVSP at UVA is a collaboration among the President's Office, the Provost's Office, the [School of Law](#), the [Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy](#), the [College and Graduate School of Arts & Sciences](#), the [Equity Center](#), the [Karsh Institute of Democracy](#), and community partners. By leveraging the collective expertise and resources, the project aims to drive meaningful change in addressing gun violence at the local, regional, and national levels. This work is reflected in the updates below.

Another collaboration among the Batten School, The Equity Center, City of Promise, and local government is set to launch a Youth Council program in Fall 2025. This initiative aims to empower youth by giving them a voice in community decisions and policymaking. This is just one way in which The Equity Center at UVA is committed to providing staff, logistical, and implementation support for the [President's Council on UVA-Community Partnerships](#) and its working groups. To date, The Equity Center has played a pivotal role in supporting various community initiatives aimed at enhancing safety and engagement within the local community.

There are also tremendous efforts taking place in the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County. Many of these efforts are based on collaboration among the city, county, and the University. Highlights of these efforts include:

Goal 1: Create protective community environments.

- **Coordination of Crisis Response Teams:**

- [The Human Services Alternative Response Team \(HART\)](#) is a joint program of [Albemarle County Department of Social Services](#), [Albemarle County Fire Rescue](#), and [Albemarle County Police Department](#). Launched in July 2023, HART's purpose is to respond and follow up on emergency calls that are mental health and/or substance use related through a collaborative, trauma-informed, human-centered approach.
- Charlottesville City's Crisis Response (ANCHOR) team launched in early July 2024 and will follow the successful model of the Albemarle County crisis response team.
- The [University of Virginia Police Department](#) states that, "Approximately 90 percent of UPD patrol officers have been trained in Crisis Intervention Techniques that help officers recognize an individual who has a mental illness or displays signs of being in crisis. The training also gives officers tools to effectively communicate with someone who may be in crisis and need assistance. UVA Police takes pride in our involvement with our local Crisis Intervention

Team”.¹ Additionally, 85% of police officers in Albemarle County have completed Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training; the other 15% are in the initial training process. Albemarle County is also working to train its officers in Integrating Communications Assessments and Tactics ICAT training. The University of Virginia is implementing a Mobile Crisis Co-Response Team that aims to be operational by early 2025.

- Pre-Arrest Diversion Programs are designed to support youth by accessing programs, services, and activities that provide positive, healthy outlets so youth can avoid juvenile justice involvement. Currently, the City and Albemarle County Police Departments are coordinating with the City of Charlottesville Department of Human Services to launch a program locally that would allow youth who have no prior history with law enforcement to divert to services for low-level offenses as opposed to entering in the court system. Benefits of this practice include decreasing the risk to re-offend, freeing up resources to focus on more serious crime, and increasing graduation rates.
- **Build Positive Relationships:** Leverage Project Safe Neighborhoods
 - The City of Charlottesville, Albemarle County, and the University are collaborating to make the community safer under Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN). Officially launched in August 2023, PSN is a national initiative that fosters collaboration among federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, community organizations, and other key stakeholders. By working together, they identify the most pressing violent crime issues within communities and develop innovative, comprehensive strategies to create safer and more vibrant neighborhoods. Project Safe Neighborhood has four major pillars: accountability, focused and strategic enforcement, community engagement, and prevention and intervention. The work of the Community Safety Implementation Group is focused on supporting community engagement and prevention and intervention efforts.
- **Youth Empowerment:** There are partnering efforts among [Charlottesville City Council](#), [City of Promise](#), and [UVA's Batten School](#) to empower youth through training and mentorship programs. These initiatives enable young individuals to identify and address community needs related to gun violence.

Goal 2: Enhance place-based programming and access to care.

- **Community Engagement Events:** In partnership with Bonnie Gordon’s "Music as Community Engagement" class, The Equity Center supported a Youth Basketball Tournament with the [Tonsler League](#) on Juneteenth 2024. This event, held at the UVA outdoor basketball courts, not only provided a platform for youth engagement but also

¹ <https://uvapolice.virginia.edu/crisis-intervention-team>

helped reconnect the community with the relocated courts. The event included the provision of food and materials, fostering a sense of community and belonging. Additionally, The Equity Center helped to plan and support an In-Season Tournament for the Tonsler League at the John Paul Jones Arena. This significant event marked one of many ongoing efforts to engage community youth and young adults positively. The event highlighted a collaborative spirit and provided a constructive outlet for youth participation and community bonding. Relatedly, [Starr Hill Pathways](#) organized a visit to the National Office on Gun Violence Prevention, led by Brian Williams and staff from the [Batten School](#). This visit served as a model of mentorship and learning for high school and college students. The insights were so impactful that three students were awarded scholarships on the spot, demonstrating the value of youth engagement in public policy discussions.

- **Support for Schools:** The Equity Center supports educational programming for children in neighborhoods affected by gun violence, including summer and after-school activities led by community fellows. Financial support has been provided to two mothers for their applications to the [School of Continuing and Professional Studies' Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies](#) program at UVA, highlighting the Center's commitment to supporting families. [Community Fellow in Residence](#) NyShae Carter will expand this programming, with place-based support at two local community centers in the fall of 2024. Additionally, there is an ongoing collaboration with staff at [Lugo-McGinnis](#), the alternative high school, which includes funding for educational trips and continued support for initiatives like school events and a [Civil Rights Tour](#), ensuring students receive a holistic educational experience. Furthermore, The Equity Center's Community Fellows in Residence program supports Sandra Aviles' Community Engager project with [Charlottesville United for Public Education](#). This program amplifies community voices in local education discussions, promoting transparency and community involvement.

Goal 3: Improve coordination and information flow among community members, service providers, schools, and law enforcement.

- **Local Solutions for Charlottesville/Albemarle:** The Gun Violence Solutions Project (GVSP), in collaboration with local partners such as the school systems and police, supports data sharing and analysis to address gun violence in Charlottesville and Albemarle. The [Equity Center](#) coordinates these efforts. UVA's [School of Law](#) and [Batten School](#) are involved in policy development and youth mentoring to tackle gun violence through local initiatives.
- **Exploring Solutions | Research and Education:** The GVSP supports UVA faculty in developing courses on gun violence covering cultural, historical, and policy perspectives. A pan-University working group, led by the [Karsh Institute of Democracy](#), is facilitating research collaborations and has funded multiple projects. They aim to address gun violence through a series of workshops and seed grants.

- GVSP also focuses on sharing successful local interventions with other communities and policymakers. Starting in July 2024, journalist James Burnett from The Trace will join as a fellow to contribute to UVA’s programming and report on solutions to gun violence.
- **Data Gathering, Sharing, and Analysis:**
 - The Equity Center has been contracted by the [City of Charlottesville](#) and [Albemarle County Human Services](#) to produce the first regional Inclusive Community Profile. This comprehensive document will address issues contributing to gun violence and other community concerns, including poverty and opioid addiction, providing a crucial resource for identifying and addressing disparities within the region. Additionally, discussions are ongoing to continue the development of a community resource app, as this aligns with [Grand Challenges Research Investments](#). This app would provide a centralized platform for accessing community resources; progress is being made to enhance its features and usability.
 - Efforts are underway to facilitate the sharing and utilization of data among local agencies and researchers to inform evidence-based solutions. This involves providing support, infrastructure, and analytical assistance through partnerships with [The Equity Center](#).
- **Policy Development:** Faculty and students from the [UVA Law School’s State and Local Government Policy Clinic](#) and the [Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy](#) are engaged in developing policies aimed at preventing and mitigating gun violence.

Goal 4: Connect youth to caring adults and activities.

- **Senior Stay Day:** In May, 2024 Pipelines and Pathways partnered with the [One-Stop-Shop](#), [Albemarle County Public Schools](#), [Piedmont Virginia Community College](#), [The President’s Council](#), and others to host Senior Stay Day, a One-Stop Shop for area seniors who will complete high school and stay in the area to connect them with opportunities for success. This was followed by an event for other adults in the community seeking employment.
- **School-Based Recommendations**
 - **Charlottesville City Schools:**
 - **Safety Protocols:** Utilizing the [Virginia Student Threat Assessment Guidelines](#), schools maintain internal threat assessment teams without employing school resource officers. Discussions are ongoing about integrating specially trained Youth Resource Officers.
 - **Chronic Absenteeism:** Student Support Liaisons work to identify and address barriers to attendance, collaborating with school staff and community providers.
 - **Albemarle County Public Schools:**

- **School Counseling Program:** Counseling services are available across all educational levels, supported by specialized websites and resources. The program addresses students' mental health needs and promotes a safe and inclusive school environment through [Anonymous Alerts](#) for bullying and comprehensive support services.
- **Youth-Centered Prevention and Intervention Programming:** In collaboration with the [Community Attention Youth Internship Program](#) (CAYIP), The Equity Center is providing internships for 37 Starr Hill Pathways sophomores. These internships offer hands-on experience and mentorship, preparing youth for future success and fostering a connection to their community. Additionally, in partnership with [ReadyKids](#), The Equity Center provides mentoring and group discussions for middle-school girls on topics such as self-care and confidence. Plans are in place to expand these support services to high schools for the 2024-2025 school year, demonstrating a commitment to holistic youth development and well-being.

Further progress on the [recommendations of the Community Safety Working Group](#) will be guided by the Community Safety Implementation Group, which will continue to meet and work towards community solutions, guided by its [charter](#).