



## **How Local and State-Level Advocacy Can Help Adopt Recommendations In The Seven-Point Plan to address root causes of Gun Violence and Prioritize Trauma Recovery.**

Tools to be strong advocates at the local and state level are critical to our work. Tools are also essential to the success of any campaign. Some of the tools that can help you be successful are:

- **Raising awareness:** The ability to share your vision for change and concrete solution to the problem with others in a way to build your base
- **Build Local Advocacy Capacity:** The ability to have your base know how to be strong advocates for their community through training and research.
- **Elevating the voices of underserved crime survivors:** The ability to bring people together who are directly impacted by the issue we are working on and provide them the space and training to be leaders in your campaign.
- **Assess the Landscape:** Identifying all the key players that can help or hinder your success in the campaign. These can be individuals or institutions.
- **Identify your decision maker:** Who is the person that can make a decision to give you what you want?
- **Your proposal for change:** Creating language and solutions to present to the decision maker and your base.
- **Call To Action:** What you want people to do. This will vary depending on who you are talking to and the timing of the campaign.

Now let's dive into some key advocacy strategies you can use to help adopt the gun violence policy recommendations.

### **Assessing The Landscape**

Before undertaking an advocacy campaign to expand victims' services to underserved populations, it is important to understand the extent of the problem, the type of services that are available (if any), and which organizations and agencies exist to provide support — both to underserved victims and in any advocacy effort to secure funding. Gathering information through direct contact and research, including the decision maker's record on this issue, organizations and leaders that have spoken publicly about this, and local media coverage, will help you uncover potential allies and help ensure that your efforts will be enhanced and not duplicated.

### **Building Statewide and Local Advocacy Capacity**

The next step is to create and build up the advocacy community in your city. This effort includes organizing community organizations, advocacy groups, and crime survivors — particularly those in high-crime neighborhoods. It is crucial to build relationships within the communities themselves, both with those directly impacted by crime and with the community-based organizations that serve them. Identifying victims of and families affected by gun violence, and empowering them to talk about their experiences and their unmet needs, will be a critical tool as you move forward.

### **Identify Key Decision-makers and Find Answers to Other Key Questions**

Before engaging fully in advocacy efforts, there is key information that advocates should have to understand strategies that will work in their state. Below is a list of questions advocates should answer to help build this body of knowledge.

- What is the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) administering agency in your state, and who are the key leaders/contacts to engage? Listing of state VOCA administrators: <http://www.navaa.org/statedirectory.html>
- Who are the other key decision-makers, including local elected officials, that may oversee the VOCA process?
- Who are the key decision-makers, including local elected officials, in your city or county overseeing public safety funding including violence intervention, violence prevention, mental health, crisis response, etc.)?
- Is a council or committee making these determinations or steering the funding process? If so, what different perspectives are represented (or not)? What is the most effective way to contact the individual members?
- Are there opportunities for public comment (e.g., public hearings) or to otherwise submit information to the state and local decision-makers to make the case for investment in underserved communities?

Engaging and meeting with key decision-makers, including state and local elected officials that may oversee the funding sources, is crucial. Build relationships with these key decision-makers that allow for dialogue and education on the importance of supporting communities most impacted by gun violence.

### **Advocating for The Policy Recommendations**

In addition to building relationships through one-on-one meetings, organizations must conduct dedicated outreach and advocacy — directly and, when possible, through grassroots efforts with their members or constituencies.

#### **These advocacy actions can include:**

- Host a virtual or in-person town hall event to discuss the recommendations and advocacy actions. Invite key decision-makers to participate in the town hall event.
- Attendance at local public hearings related to gun violence and public safety.

- Providing written or oral testimony at the public hearings — either by an organization representative, a community member or other “influencer,” or a crime survivor or their family member
- Organizing letter-writing or a local sign-on letter (via U.S. mail or email) and telephone campaigns
- Organizing a social media campaign
- Starting an online petition asking community members to sign on.
- Pitch stories to news reporters about local gun violence issues, gaps in services, and recommendations.
- Meet with your local editorial board (s) to share the recommendation and collaborate on a series of stories of people affected by gun violence. Ask editorial boards of newspapers (which write opinion pieces on behalf of the newspaper) to write an editorial urging city leaders to adopt the recommendations.
- Write and submit letters to the editor or op-eds (opinion pieces that run opposite of the newspaper’s editorials) from victims of gun violence.
- Use events and activities to generate media interest.
- Organize a day of action to draw attention to the issue and recommendations.

**Call to Action:**

- Encourage survivors and families impacted by gun violence to share their stories and experiences with gun violence on social media using the #survivorsspeak hashtag.
- Invite survivors, families, community members, advocates, and community organizations to attend events, sign the petition, and write to their elected officials expressing support to adopt the recommendations.
- Distribute the policy recommendation report to state and local legislators, administrators, and key decision-makers.

**Sample Advocacy Letter:**

Dear (Insert Name):

We are writing to you as a concerned member of our community. I’m also writing on behalf of (name of organization (s), a community-based organization that works with victims of gun violence) and Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice (Chapter).

We’re writing to urge you and our local government to adopt policy recommendations to provide essential funding for services and resources to support the communities most affected by gun violence. Individuals, families, and neighborhoods across our city feel the devastating impact of gun violence. We must take significant steps to address this issue and aid those in need.

We strongly advocate for the following policy recommendations:

- Establish and Grow Trauma Recovery Centers
- Increase Access to Public Safety Funding for Organizations on the Front Lines of Gun Violence

- Fund Community-Based Organizations Providing Peer-to-Peer Support to Victims
- Expand Access to Victim Compensation and End Discriminatory Exclusions
- Develop Flexible Victim Assistance Funds
- Document and Understand the Harm Caused by Gun Violence

As you know, gun violence has become a pressing public health and safety concern, and it is incumbent upon our government to respond with comprehensive and proactive solutions. Those in low-income communities, especially communities of color, are often repeat crime victims and are historically overlooked when receiving victim services following a criminal incident. Crime victims often experience trauma that has long-term, if not life-long effects, and can often result in repeat victimization.

While we appreciate the efforts already undertaken to curb violence and promote safety, it is evident that more needs to be done to assist the victims, families, and our community. As a member of Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice (City Chapter)

As members of Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice, we believe that if adopted and adequately funded, these policy recommendations can significantly improve the lives of those affected by gun violence and foster a safer, more resilient community for all residents. I kindly request that you prioritize these policy recommendations and work with your fellow elected officials to allocate the necessary resources for their implementation. By taking decisive action, we can show our commitment to the well-being of our community and make a lasting impact on the lives of those who have been touched by gun violence.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. I look forward to seeing our city proactively support the communities affected by gun violence. If there are any opportunities for community input or discussions on this issue, please inform me, as I am eager to contribute to this important conversation.

Sincerely,

[List Names & Organizations]

### **About the Alliance for Safety and Justice.**

The Alliance for Safety and Justice (ASJ) is a multi-state public safety organization that aims to replace over-incarceration with more effective public safety solutions rooted in crime prevention, community health, rehabilitation, and support for crime victims. ASJ partners with state leaders and advocates to achieve safety and justice reforms through advocacy, organizing, coalition building, research, and communications.

### **About Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice**

Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice. Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice is a national network of 180,000 crime victims that are joining together to share stories, heal together, and advocate for a justice system that prioritizes healing, prevention, and recovery. Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice is a flagship project of the Alliance for Safety and Justice.