

Adapting Conflict Mediation Work to New Situations

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Gun violence plagues many communities in the United States, with some communities having homicide rates in excess of 100 deaths per 100,000 residents, making homicide the leading cause of death in these areas. The CeaseFire model for violence prevention has been proven by an independent evaluation to decrease shootings and homicides by on average 20%. An essential element of this model is the conflict mediation work done by specially trained community health workers who seeks to stop shootings before they happen by intervening with the parties involved. The CeaseFire intervention in Chicago has had substantial success with over 1,950 high-risk conflicts mediated since 2004. The position of violence interrupter, a type of outreach worker who specializes in conflict mediation, will be discussed in detail, including the characteristics of successful violence interrupters, strategies used to mediate conflicts, training of violence interrupters, and the management of the violence interrupters. This session will examine how the work of the mediators has changed as the gang structure in Chicago has gone from centralized gangs to small cliques. Additionally, adaptations to the CeaseFire model as it has been implemented in other cities will be examined, including the development of the 'hybrid outreach worker' who works with high risk clients as well as in mediating ongoing conflicts. Statistics on the success of the CeaseFire program will also be presented.

Learning objectives:

- 1) Explain the characteristics of the specialized community health workers called violence interrupters.
- 2) Examine how changes in violence in communities have forced the CeaseFire model to adapt how it works to intervene in conflicts.
- 3) Describe the adaptation to the CeaseFire model as the program has replicated in cities outside of Chicago.