

PSI

Public Safety Institute

BEST PRACTICE TOPIC

December, 2025

FOCUSED DETERRENCE

PART 1 – Focused Deterrence Approach

PART 2 – Mapping Crime

PART 3 – Prosecutor's Role

PART 4 – Social Services

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FOCUSED DETERRENCE APPROACH

PART 1

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Introduction

Focused deterrence strategies aim to reduce violence by concentrating on individuals or groups responsible for violence in a community. Community violence has profound consequences, with the most significant concern being its impact on public safety and community trust (Braga, Apel, & Welsh, 2013). As Thomas Abt (2019) emphasizes in *Bleeding Out*, most violence happens among a small group of people and in certain urban areas, often called "hot spots." Abt points out that a lot of violent crimes are committed by a few individuals, many of whom have a history of criminal behavior. Because violence is concentrated in these specific people and places, it's important to focus interventions on them to reduce crime and improve safety. Focused deterrence seeks to address this need by targeting individuals who are most responsible for violent crime (Braga & Weisburd, 2012).

While this review references Memphis, TN as an example, its analysis is not limited to this location. Instead, Memphis serves as a case study in assessing the fidelity of focused deterrence practices and evaluating whether such strategies require scaling up or adaptation in other jurisdictions.

Shelby County, including Memphis, has struggled with persistently high levels of violent crime, particularly gun violence and homicides. In 2024, the city of Memphis reported 296 homicides, marking a 25% decline from 2023, when 398 people were killed (Tennessee Bureau of Investigation, 2023; Tennessee Bar Association, 2025). However, the city's violent crime rate remains one of the highest in the nation, with the FBI reporting 2,612 violent crimes per 100,000 residents in 2023 (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2024).

In 2024, the University of Memphis Public Safety Institute issued an initial process evaluation of the City of Memphis Violence Intervention Program, which encompasses its focused deterrence approach. The evaluation is available at <https://memphis.edu/psi/research/>.

This review will be the first of a series centered around the theme of focused deterrence. The current review outlines the core functions of focused deterrence,

reviews recent research evaluating its effectiveness, and examines the history of focused deterrence strategies in Memphis, particularly in addressing firearm violence.

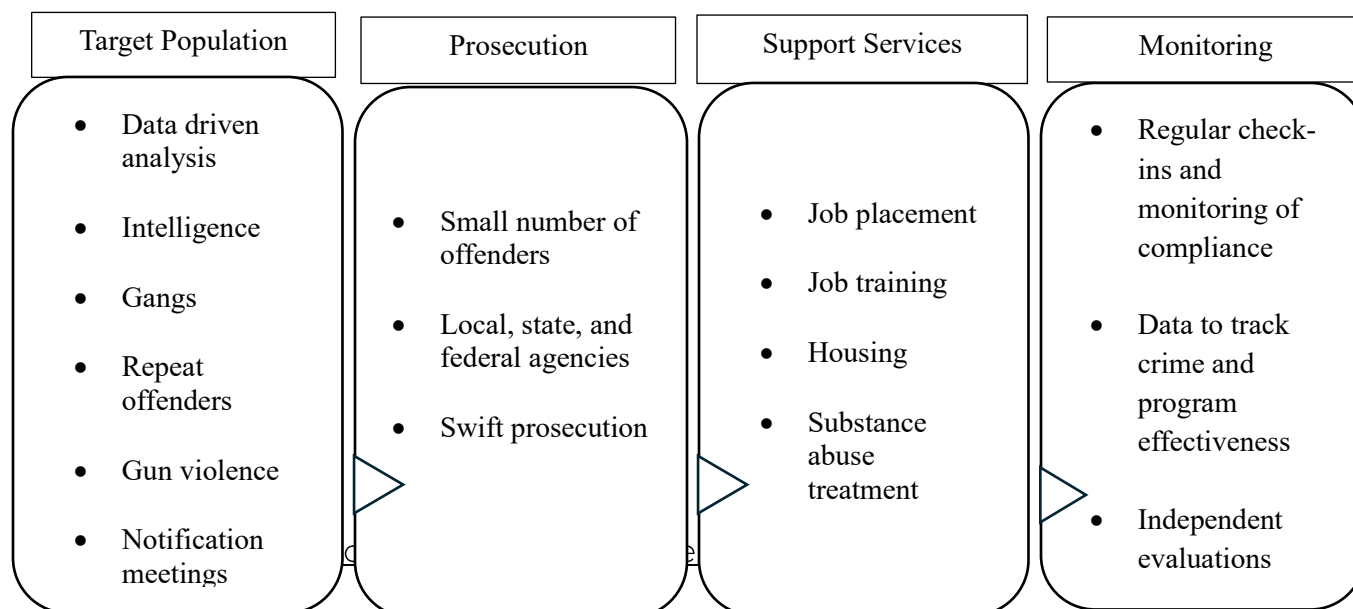
Focused Deterrence Approach



The core concept of focused deterrence is to deliver a clear message to high-risk individuals that violence will no longer be tolerated and that further involvement in crime will result in swift and certain consequences (Braga & Weisburd, 2012; Mourtgos & Adams, 2020). This strategy also provides individuals with pathways to leave a life of crime, including access to education, job training, and social services such as mental health or substance abuse treatment (Braga, Weisburd, & Turchan, 2019; Chalfin & McCrary, 2017; Zicari, 2021).

Community members play a crucial role by engaging directly with individuals involved in violence, making it clear that their actions are unacceptable. Focused deterrence operates through three primary interventions: Group Violence Intervention (GVI), Drug Market Intervention (DMI), and individual offender programs. GVI has been particularly effective in reducing gun violence and gang-related crime (Kennedy, 2011), while DMI is more targeted toward curbing drug markets by intervening with those most deeply involved in drug trafficking (National Network for Safe Communities, 2019). Individual offender programs focus on reducing recidivism by addressing the needs of repeat offenders through tailored support and deterrence strategies (Braga, Weisburd, & Turchan, 2018). Research on these strategies has highlighted differences in their application and outcomes. While the core principles remain consistent across all approaches, the evidence suggests that each intervention can have distinct impacts depending on the type of crime and the specific needs of the target population.

Using Strong Community Partnerships, Intelligence and Law Enforcement to Reduce Violent Crime



Case Studies of Successful Focused Deterrence Programs

Oakland, California's Operation Ceasefire, implemented in 2011, became a national model for reducing gun violence. Because the focused deterrence strategy was implemented, Oakland saw a 31% reduction in gun homicides (Braga et al., 2018). The success of Oakland's approach was due to its evidence-based strategy, which relied on data and intelligence to identify individuals most likely to commit or fall victim to gun violence (City of Oakland, 2023). This identification process aligns with the deterrence theme, while partnerships with community members and social service providers highlight the community engagement and social services theme. Oakland's approach followed the Group Violence Intervention (GVI) model, which targets street group-involved violence through direct communication with group members, offering social services, and setting clear legal consequences for continued violence (City of Oakland, 2023). However, in 2020, the City of Oakland began to move away from Operation Ceasefire, and homicide rates subsequently increased, rising from 16.2 per 100,000 residents in 2018 to 27.8 in 2022 (City of Oakland, 2023). Similar patterns have been observed in homicide reduction efforts elsewhere. Focused deterrence has been linked to statistically significant decreases in homicide rates, particularly when targeting gang-related violence (Braga, Weisburd, & Turchan, 2019). In Stockton, California, the Stockton Ceasefire program, launched in 1997, primarily used the Group Violence Intervention (GVI) strategy (Crime and Justice Policy Lab, 2024). This approach led to lower citywide homicide rates during its implementation compared to periods when the program was not in place (Braga et al., 2024).

The next section of the report will examine how the core policies of focused deterrence—identification of high-risk individuals, notification to those individuals, enforcement and prosecution, support services for those who want them, and sustained follow up—fit within the balanced framework of deterrence, community engagement, and services. Strategic prosecution aligns with the deterrence approach, ensuring legal consequences for violent behavior, while social services support the community engagement aspect by providing pathways for individuals to change. Sustained follow-up ties all three approaches together, reinforcing both the deterrence of further violence and the ongoing community support necessary for long-term change.

Methods Of Identifying High Risk Individuals

The first step in ensuring the success of focused deterrence is identifying high-risk individuals who are most likely to be involved in serious violent behavior. This process requires conducting an audit in collaboration with community leaders and law enforcement to pinpoint individuals who are driving violence (Rand Corporation, 2025). An audit may involve gathering insights from patrol officers about what they observe on the streets (such as gang activity or drug markets), analyzing recent violent incidents to identify individuals at risk of future involvement in violence, or working with community members to determine who is exerting control over criminal activity (Rand Corporation, 2025).

Additionally, two valuable tools for this process are crime mapping and social network analysis. Crime mapping identifies geographic hotspots where crimes are most concentrated, allowing law enforcement to apply focused deterrence strategies in high-risk areas while minimizing disruption to broader communities (Boba, 2001). Social network analysis examines relationships and connections within a community using data from arrest and court records, interviews, surveys, and emails (Papachristos & Sierra-Arévalo, 2018). When used together, these tools help identify crime patterns and key offenders more effectively.

Practices in Memphis

The current Memphis model identifies high-risk individuals for call-ins (see below) by focusing on those on probation or parole as designated by the Tennessee Department of Correction. On the other hand, for individual notification meetings (see below) individuals are identified primarily by law enforcement. Targeting individuals on parole or probation as the primary focus for identifying high-risk individuals may not always be the best approach because 1) many individuals on probation are not involved in violent crime but serving time for lower level offenses, and focused deterrence is most effective when identifying violent groups or individuals with strong ties to shootings; 2) violent crime is often committed by younger individuals, between the ages of 16 and 30, so those paroled after long sentences may have already aged out of the high-risk category by the time they are released; and 3) a broad focus on parolees/probationers could dilute efforts, leading to unnecessary surveillance of low-risk individuals and to inefficient use of resources.

Call-Ins and Notification Meetings: Engaging in High-Risk Individuals

Once high-risk individuals are identified, the next step in focused deterrence strategies is to engage them through call-ins and notification meetings (Rief & Iratzogui, 2024). These approaches serve as direct interventions designed to discourage further criminal activity while offering pathways to positive change.

Call-Ins

Call-ins are formal, group-based interventions, where law enforcement, community leaders, and social service providers meet with multiple high-risk individuals. These meetings typically take place in a neutral place like a community center, social service agency, or church (National Network for Safe Communities, 2017). Typically, during the meeting, individuals can expect four key components:

1. A list of charges and potential consequences if their violent behavior continues;
2. Evidence that law enforcement can use to convict them;
3. A discussion with family, friends, and community members about the impact of their actions; and
4. A list of available resources, including services and support, should they choose to change their path.

Notification Meetings

Notification meetings are typically individualized, or one-on-one, interventions with law enforcement officers and social service providers. These meetings are done when an individual cannot attend a formal call-in. In this meeting, law enforcement reinforces the same messages of a call-in that continued violent behavior will result in swift legal consequences, and a social service representative offers support, connecting individuals to resources. These meetings can happen through going to the individual's home, phone calls, or letters, and they provide a flexible way to ensure that individuals still receive the necessary information and support (Ward et al., 2023).

Practices in Memphis

In Memphis, the Group Violence Intervention Program (GVIP) is currently run through the city mayor's office and collaborates with the Tennessee Department of Correction, the U.S. Attorney's office, the Shelby County District Attorney's office, and the Memphis Police Department to deliver a direct and clear message to individuals involved in or at risk of engaging in violent crime: the violence must stop (City of Memphis, 2022). Call-in participants receive a dual message—that they are cared for, that resources, including referrals to services and pathways to employment, are available to them and that they will be held accountable if they do not change their violent behavior. The only requirement is that they refrain from further violence (City of Memphis, 2022). In addition to call-ins, GVIP employs one-on-one notifications, also known as house calls, where law enforcement officers and community representatives visit individuals identified as high-risk. These personalized visits communicate the same message of accountability and support, tailored to the individual's circumstances. This approach builds trust and offers a more direct form of engagement. Both call-ins and house calls are designed to be key components of Memphis' focused deterrence strategy, combining the promise of assistance with the certainty of legal consequences to reduce violent crime.

Strategic Prosecution

Once individuals or groups have been notified about their violent behavior, they are given two choices: (1) stop engaging in violence or (2) continue committing criminal acts and face the consequences. Police, prosecutors, and corrections officers collaborate to focus on identifying high-risk individuals using seven key strategies, which overlap with the identification process:

1. **Pre-arrest monitoring** – Keeping a close watch on areas where the high-risk individual is most active;
2. **Arrest** – Serving warrants and building new cases;
3. **Prosecution** – High-risk individuals receive extra attention, with a dedicated prosecutor managing their cases, recommending harsher penalties, and prioritizing conviction;

4. **Sentencing** – Post-release monitoring, including regular drug tests, home visits, and strict supervision conditions;
5. **Disrupting crime hotspots** – Law enforcement targeting high-crime areas, such as open-air drug markets, to deter criminal activity;
6. **Monitoring feuds** – Tracking conflicts between individuals and warning them to stop the violence; and
7. **Seizing illegal assets** – Confiscating money or property obtained through illegal means (Scott, 2017).

A major decision in this stage is whether to build a prosecutable case against offenders before warning them. In cities like High Point, North Carolina, and Nashville, TN, law enforcement agencies prepare cases in advance, presenting offenders with a choice during the notification meeting: cease criminal activity or face immediate prosecution. In other focused deterrence interventions, however, cases are not built ahead of time and are only pursued if the individual continues to offend (Scott, 2017). Some programs have found that having both local and federal prosecutors as partners is crucial to ensuring effective prosecution and making strategic decisions about legal action (Scott, 2017).

Practices in Memphis

Under the current focused deterrence approach in Memphis, prosecutable cases are not determined in advance. A weakness may be failure to track all within the focused deterrence program to determine whether they have picked up new charges. Disrupting crime hotspots does occur through the Memphis Police Department's Operation Code Zero. Monitoring feuds does occur to some degree through a number of street outreach programs, but they need scaling up.

Support Services: Providing Pathways to Positive Change

Social services play a vital role in helping high-risk individuals stay on the right path and reducing recidivism, as many people are unaware of the resources available to them. The most common services include job training, educational programs, and mental health or substance abuse counseling (Reichert, 2017). The goal of incorporating social services is to equip individuals with the tools they need to make better choices and build a life away from violence and illegal activities. Social workers and community organizations work closely with these individuals to provide guidance and address their specific needs. To truly turn their lives around, individuals need meaningful opportunities, and social services help make those opportunities more accessible.

Practices in Memphis

The current intervention initiative as listed on the City of Memphis website (2023) includes local organizations like United Way's Driving the Dream, the University of Tennessee Health Science Center's Center for Youth Advocacy and Well-Being, and the City of Memphis Office of Community Affairs' Manhood University. Ongoing connections with Regional One and Le Bonheur Children's Hospital in Memphis provide opportunities for coordination between hospital interventions and other areas of focused deterrence. Through GVIP, interventionists engage with gun violence victims and their families in hospital settings to support recovery, prevent retaliation, and ensure safety (City of Memphis, 2022). However, there is some question as to whether all participants are receiving all services requested.

Sustained Follow-Up: Reinforcing Accountability and Support

The last step of focused deterrence is follow-up with high-risk individuals. Maintaining ongoing contact is crucial because it reinforces the message that law enforcement is closely monitoring their actions, serving as a continuous reminder of the consequences if they return to criminal activity (Scott, 2017). Regular engagement

also reassures the community that authorities are genuinely invested in helping individuals change, rather than solely focused on punishment. This approach builds trust and demonstrates that the goal is to provide a way out of violence. Additionally, consistent follow-ups create opportunities to assess whether the strategy is effective; if not, adjustments can be made to improve interventions (Scott, 2017). Overall, checking in with both individuals and the community helps prevent recidivism by ensuring that those at risk have the necessary support.

Practices in Memphis

Monitoring of compliance and accountability for continued violent behavior may not be as robust as it should be. Sustaining services requested is a challenge requiring a continual provision of resources.

Conclusion

This review highlighted major components of focused deterrence. Ensuring strong sustainable relationships can provide successful outcomes. Effective focused deterrence requires identifying high-risk individuals; it depends on ongoing communication, strategic partnerships, and continuous evaluation. By connecting individuals to existing resources, such as job training, social services, and intervention programs, law enforcement and community leaders can offer real alternatives to violence. Regular follow-ups reinforce the consequences of continued criminal activity while also demonstrating a commitment to rehabilitation rather than just punishment. Additionally, collaborative approaches like street and hospital interventions ensure that support reaches individuals where they need it most. To maximize impact, it is essential to continuously assess and refine these strategies, ensuring that all components—identification, notification, enforcement, support, and follow-up—work together effectively. Strengthening communication across agencies and enhancing existing resources will not only improve the success of focused deterrence but also foster long-term community trust and safety.

Our next publication on focused deterrence will provide a closer look at the identification of high-risk individuals.

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MAPPING CRIME – PART 2

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Introduction

Crime mapping plays a critical role in the implementation of **focused deterrence strategies**, particularly by aiding in the identification of high-risk locations—often referred to as *hot spots*—where law enforcement can concentrate its efforts. Within a focused deterrence framework, mapping helps agencies not only visualize patterns of criminal activity over time but also strategically identify neighborhoods, blocks, or intersections where gun violence and group-related crimes cluster. This spatial awareness allows for a more precise and efficient allocation of deterrence resources, such as targeted enforcement and community engagement (Corsaro & Engel, 2015). The current paper provides an overview of crime mapping strategies, including decisions around technologies and what to map. Then, as an example, it reviews the application of these tools in Memphis and Shelby County. It concludes with recommendations to better align crime mapping practices with focused deterrence goals.

Mapping Crime: Background

U of M Hot Spot Policing

WHAT IS A CRIME HOT SPOT?
A specific area or location where crimes are clustered.

WHAT IS HOT SPOT POLICING?
A strategy that targets and focuses on small geographic areas with high crime rates.

EFFECTIVENESS
Research has shown that hot spot policing can significantly reduce crime without displacement to other areas.

STRATEGIES FOR HOT SPOT POLICING

- Increased police patrols
- Problem-oriented policing
- Focused deterrence

Crime mapping has come a long way from its humble beginnings. Early efforts involved little more than pushing pins into a corkboard to track incidents. In the 19th century, pioneers like André-Michel Guerry and Adolphe Quetelet advanced the field by using thematic maps to visualize crime patterns, while John Snow's 1854 cholera study in London famously demonstrated the power of spatial analysis by tracing an outbreak to a single water pump (Tulchinsky, 2018). These early examples laid the foundation for modern crime mapping, which has become a critical tool in law enforcement and public safety strategies.

Current Use

Today, agencies use geographic information systems (GIS) and other digital technologies to not only visualize crime locations but to understand the conditions under which crime is more likely to occur. Crime mapping helps law enforcement and researchers determine where crime is happening and why, moving beyond raw numbers to reveal underlying spatial patterns. With advancements in real-time data collection and mapping tools, analysts can now identify crime-prone areas like gas stations, convenience stores, or public transit stops, which often feature high foot traffic and limited surveillance—conditions that can attract criminal activity (Ratcliffe, 2010).

This modern approach to mapping supports hot spot policing, a strategy that concentrates enforcement efforts in small geographic areas with high crime intensity rather than distributing officers uniformly. Studies show this targeted deployment can reduce crime without significantly displacing it to neighboring areas (Braga et al., 2014), aligning closely with the principles of focused deterrence, which similarly emphasizes concentrating limited resources where they will have the greatest impact.

To identify these hot spots, agencies often use tools like kernel density estimation (KDE), which highlights clusters of crime incidents across a given area (Eck et al., 2005). The intensity of crime in a particular location is visually represented as “hotter” indicating higher concentrations of incidents. The choice of spatial scale is also important; analyzing data across different levels, whether by city, neighborhood, or block, can influence how hot spots are interpreted and where resources are deployed.

In the context of focused deterrence, these spatial insights are especially valuable. Crime mapping not only helps visualize where violence or group activity is most intense but also allows agencies to link incidents, detect retaliatory patterns, and

focus interventions on the people and places driving the most harm (Weisburd & Lum, 2005). When integrated into community-oriented policing, mapping also promotes transparency and collaboration by making crime patterns accessible and actionable for both law enforcement and the communities they serve.

Crime Mapping Decisions: How and What to Map

Scales of Crime Mapping: Micro and Macro Approaches

One important element of crime mapping is the level of spatial focus. Neighborhood- or micro-level mapping offers a closer view of where crime is occurring and helps identify specific patterns tied to individual behaviors or repeat locations (Buil-Gil, 2021; Eck et al., 2005; Stroker, 2008). Zooming in on small areas—such as a single street, intersection, or block—makes it easier to identify high-risk spots, such as a particular street corner with frequent robberies or a bus stop with multiple assaults. This granular view allows law enforcement and city officials to better understand the immediate environmental or social factors that may be contributing to crime and to take targeted actions. Local-level mapping is especially useful for addressing persistent problems in specific areas, stopping recurring incidents, and preventing violence from escalating or spreading—key components of focused deterrence efforts.

On the other hand, macro-level mapping provides a broader lens by examining crime trends across larger geographic areas, such as entire precincts, cities, or even regions (Stroker, 2008). While it doesn't provide the same street-level detail, this approach is valuable for identifying larger patterns, such as citywide increases in violent crime or shifts in crime rates over time. It can also help explain how broader factors—like population change, economic conditions, or shifts in law enforcement policy—may be influencing crime (Braga et al., 2019; Levitt, 2004; Stowell et al., 2009). Macro-level mapping is ideal when making policy decisions that affect multiple communities, planning citywide prevention strategies, or analyzing the long-term impact of social or economic interventions.

Both approaches—micro and macro—are essential, and each serves a different but complementary purpose. In a focused deterrence framework, micro-level mapping helps pinpoint the most immediate places and people for intervention, while macro-level analysis ensures that efforts are informed by the larger context and can adapt to broader shifts over time.

Temporal and Topical Scope in Crime Mapping

A second important dimension of crime mapping is the scope of focus, which includes both the time frame of analysis and the type of crime being mapped. Short-term data, often collected over the span of a few days or weeks, is particularly useful for detecting immediate spikes in firearm violence or emerging patterns related to specific events or seasonal changes (Weisel, 2011). This kind of data allows law enforcement to respond rapidly to active threats, such as patterns of retaliation or group violence, where timing is critical. Short-term mapping can guide real-time adjustments to patrol strategies, resource deployment, and interventions—especially during periods of heightened risk like shooting incidents, holiday weekends, or large public gatherings.

In contrast, long-term data offers a broader perspective, helping identify slow-building trends that may not be apparent in short-term snapshots. While a few weeks of data might suggest a temporary drop in crime, long-term trends could reveal a steady increase over several years. This type of analysis is vital for avoiding overreaction to short-term fluctuations and is most effective when informing strategic planning, policy development, or the evaluation of ongoing crime reduction strategies (Cheng & Adepeju, 2014).

The temporal aspect impacts the number of crimes that are represented on the crime map. An essential aspect of crime mapping accuracy lies in the number of incidents included in the dataset. For example, analyzing only three or four crimes can result in a map that appears scattered or disorganized, making it difficult to identify meaningful patterns. Depending on how the points are distributed, such a small dataset might misleadingly suggest that crime is happening everywhere—or nowhere in particular. This can lead to misinterpretations of crime distribution and make it harder for law enforcement to prioritize interventions effectively. In contrast, using a larger dataset—such as mapping 10,000 crimes over a span of several months—provides a more reliable foundation for identifying true hotspots and recurring problem areas. With more data, analysts can differentiate between isolated incidents and persistent trends. For instance, a single robbery on a block may be random, but twenty robberies in the same area over time signal a deeper issue.

Larger datasets allow for clearer pattern recognition, more accurate trend analysis, and better-informed decision-making when allocating law enforcement resources.

Crime mapping can also vary in topical scope—focusing either on a single crime type (e.g., shootings, robberies) or groupings of related offenses. Determining the appropriate time frame and crime category depends on the goals of the analysis and the specific problem being addressed. The table below offers several considerations in determining the scope of mapping:

Table 1.

Map Different Types of Crime Together when:	Do Not Map Different Types of Crime Together when:
They are related crimes (e.g., burglary and theft) (Velasco et al., 2000)	They relate to different risk factors (violent vs. non-violent) (Boba, 2005)
They demonstrate broad trends or hotspots (Boba, 2005)	It obscures other meaningful patterns (Velasco et al., 2000)
They have similar crime characteristics (Ratcliffe, 2010)	They have separate and distinct causes (Weisburd & Lum, 2005)
Analyzing overall crime distribution (Chainey & Ratcliffe, 2013)	The focus is on specific crime types (Ratcliffe, 2010)

Table 1 above provides soft logical rules that are research driven on when and when not to combine types of crime in mapping/analysis. Whether or not to map different types of crime together depends on the goals of the analysis and the nature of the crimes involved. It can be useful to map multiple crime types together when they are closely related, such as burglary and theft, or when the goal is to identify broad crime trends or overall hotspots (Velasco et al., 2000; Boba, 2005). Combining crimes with similar characteristics or shared risk factors can provide a clearer picture of general crime distribution across a city or neighborhood (Ratcliffe, 2010; Chainey & Ratcliffe, 2013).

However, it's important to avoid combining crime types when doing so could obscure important differences or hide distinct patterns. For example, violent and non-violent

crimes often have different causes and risk factors and mapping them together may mask meaningful insights needed for targeted interventions (Boba, 2005; Weisburd & Lum, 2005). If the goal is to analyze specific crime types, such as shootings or assaults, these should be mapped separately to maintain analytical clarity (Ratcliffe, 2010). In short, the decision to map crime types together or separately should be driven by the purpose of the analysis, the nature of the crimes, and the need for precision in identifying trends or informing strategic responses.

Current Operations in Mapping Crime

Memphis, Tennessee employs a variety of advanced technologies and data-driven tools to enhance its crime mapping and prevention efforts, primarily through Memphis Police Department's (MPD's) Real Time Crime Center (RTCC). These tools work together to improve public safety and enable more strategic deployment of law enforcement resources.

The RTCC functions as a centralized intelligence hub, operating 2,100 cameras across 650 locations throughout the city (Atlas of Surveillance, 2022). It integrates surveillance video, license plate readers, and other real-time data sources to provide officers with immediate access to information during active incidents. When a crime is reported, analysts at the RTCC can access nearby footage, identify individuals with prior criminal records, and examine recent crime patterns in the area. This real-time access enhances decision-making, helps identify suspects more quickly, and can support more efficient investigations.

The RTCC also incorporates a data-driven system which analyzes historical crime data, including time of day, type of offense, and location, to detect patterns and forecast future hotspots. This predictive approach supports preventive policing by focusing patrols and surveillance in areas with elevated risk. It also serves as a performance management tool, helping MPD assess the effectiveness of specific strategies and make real-time adjustments.

As Memphis continues to explore focused deterrence strategies, there are promising opportunities to build on the strong technological foundation provided by the RTCC. For instance, adding longer-term mapping tools and standardized spatial boundaries could strengthen the ability to identify chronic hotspots and align enforcement with

broader social indicators. This would allow for a deeper understanding of where persistent problems exist and how they may relate to underlying structural conditions. While current efforts are highly effective in providing real-time intelligence and short-term responsiveness, expanding the analytic scope could further support the city's ability to apply focused deterrence approaches that address both immediate risks and long-term trends.

Conclusion

As Memphis continues to invest in focused deterrence strategies, crime mapping stands to play an even more influential role—not only in identifying where crime is most concentrated but in uncovering why it persists in certain areas. Crime mapping has already proven useful for tracking incidents and directing patrols, but the next evolution involves leveraging mapping as a tool for understanding underlying conditions that contribute to violence and disorder. Integrating variables such as unemployment, poverty, housing instability, and education levels into spatial analyses can illuminate structural factors that often drive persistent hotspots (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2011; Weisburd et al., 2012). These insights allow for more context-aware deterrence strategies that combine enforcement with prevention and community engagement.

For example, mapping areas with high gang activity alongside indicators of housing instability or school dropout rates may reveal opportunities for combining targeted policing efforts with social services, such as housing outreach, youth programming, or job training. This approach moves focused deterrence beyond immediate suppression and toward sustainable violence reduction.

Crime mapping can also be used to monitor demographic shifts, population turnover, and neighborhood transitions, which all affect where and how crime manifests. These dynamics are especially relevant in rapidly changing urban areas, where proactive strategies depend on timely, localized data. As new communities emerge, or old ones experience strain, crime mapping offers a valuable way to anticipate emerging hotspots before they escalate.

In Memphis, existing tools such as MPD's Real Time Crime Center (RTCC) provide a solid foundation for data-driven policing. These tools already support effective short-term, real-time responses, and with continued development, they can be expanded to include

long-term analysis, standardized spatial boundaries, and cross-sector collaboration. These enhancements would better align crime mapping practices with the core principles of focused deterrence—precision, accountability, and community partnership.

Ultimately, crime mapping—when paired with advancing technologies such as GIS, predictive analytics, and risk terrain modeling—has the power to transform policing into a more responsive, equitable, and informed system. When used strategically, these tools help law enforcement make smarter decisions, improve public safety outcomes, and build lasting trust with the communities they serve. Memphis can lead the nation with innovation and commitment to violence reduction by enhancing its use of crime mapping which is critical to creating safer neighborhoods and supporting the broader goals of focused deterrence.

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PROSECUTOR'S ROLE – PART 3

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Introduction

Prosecutors determine how laws are enforced, how resources are allocated, and how justice is administered. Prosecutors are responsible for making key decisions about whether to file charges, what charges to pursue, and how to resolve cases—decisions that carry significant implications for both individuals and communities. Their actions influence not only legal outcomes but also perceptions of justice. Unlike other roles in the system, prosecutors employ considerable discretion and must balance legal standards with ethical considerations, community interests, and public safety goals.

Prosecutors play a crucial role in the application of focused deterrence strategies, specifically in initiatives tailored to reduce violent crime by those who are part of the focused deterrence approach. Focused deterrence emphasizes identifying individuals who commit the most serious offenses, and delivering a clear, consistent message that violence will not be tolerated. Prosecutors help deliver this message to individuals by charging those who continue to commit violent crimes and supporting help and change for those who want to do better.

Additionally, strategic prosecution aligns prosecutorial efforts with violence reduction goals. It emphasizes prioritizing cases involving chronic violent offenders and high-risk individuals identified through data and intelligence. Rather than pursuing every case with the same intensity, strategic prosecution focuses on impact—targeting individuals that drive crime, coordinating with law enforcement, and using evidence to inform prosecutorial discretion. Within the framework of focused deterrence, prosecutors play a dual role: enforcing legal consequences swiftly and consistently for violent or chronic offenders, while also supporting diversion, rehabilitation, or social services for those willing to change. Their decisions help send a clear message that violence will not be tolerated, but also that support is available for those seeking a different path (Braga & Weisburd, 2012). By grounding their work in real-world outcomes—such as reducing gun violence, minimizing unnecessary incarceration, and ensuring equality—prosecutors become central to sustainable, community-based crime prevention.

The current review examines how prosecutorial strategies align with focused deterrence goals, focusing on discretion, accountability, and interagency coordination,

and uses Memphis as an example to understand how these efforts impact local violence prevention.

STRATEGIC PROSECUTION IN FOCUSED DETERRENCE



What is Strategic Prosecution?

Strategic prosecution is a targeted, data-driven approach that focuses resources on violent crime, repeat offenders, and serious threats, while promoting fairness, transparency, and community trust.



Tools

- **Call-in Meetings:** Offenders are notified of possible legal consequences and offered services to help change.
- **Custom Notifications:** One-on-one warnings from prosecutors and police
- **Priority Prosecution:** Swift action against individuals or groups that continue to engage in violence
- **Chronic Offender Lists:** Track and monitor repeat violent offenders.

Key Principles



- **Selectivity:** Focuses on the most serious offenders and violent groups.
- **Leverage:** Uses legal tools and sentencing options to increase certainty as opposed to just severity of consequences.
- **Partnership:** Coordination with law enforcement, social services, and community leaders
- **Transparency:** Offenders are told in advance what behavior will trigger prosecution and that support is available to help them change.



Why it Works

It works because it focuses limited resources where violence is most concentrated and encourages behavioral change through certainty, not severity.

Challenges in Strategic Prosecution Implementation

For prosecutors to be effective in reducing serious crime, it is important that they have strong teamwork with police, courts, and service providers. Working together makes it easy to put their focus on people most likely to reoffend. Unfortunately, this can be difficult when there is a lack of trust or clear communication between agencies. Another challenge is the limited technology and data systems in some jurisdictions, which make it hard to track outcomes or identify high-risk individuals accurately (La Vigne et al., 2017). Prosecutors may not have access to reliable, up-to-date data that could guide decision-making. Even when data is available, relying too heavily on law enforcement records can introduce bias—especially if those records overlook certain crimes or disproportionately target specific communities (Braga & Weisburd, 2012). In addition, staff turnover and heavy caseloads can make it hard for prosecutors to stay consistent with long-term strategies like focused deterrence. Strategic prosecution takes time, specialized knowledge, and long-term commitment, elements that aren't always built into traditional prosecutorial structures. Despite these barriers, prosecutors still have powerful tools, like discretion, that can further help them respond effectively to serious crime.

Prosecutorial Discretion: Balancing Power and Responsibility

Good use of discretion allows prosecutors to deliver consequences where needed most while also giving second chances for those who are willing to change their behavior. Unlike judges or juries, prosecutors decide whether charges are filed, what charges to pursue, and how cases are resolved. This is known as prosecutorial discretion, which gives prosecutors total control to shape outcomes—but it also comes with significant responsibility. When used justly, discretion allows prosecutors to tailor responses to the circumstance of each case, ensuring that justice is not only lawful, but also fair and proportional (American Bar Association, 2017). Without transparency or accountability, this same discretion can contribute to unequal treatment, inconsistent outcomes, and public mistrust.

Discretion plays a central role in charging decisions, plea bargaining, and diversion eligibility. A prosecutor may choose to file the maximum charge allowed by law,

negotiate a plea to a lesser offense, or opt not to file charges at all. These choices are influenced by many factors—including evidence strength, criminal history, victim preferences, and public safety considerations. In recent years, some offices have developed written guidelines or internal review procedures to help standardize these decisions and reduce the risk of implicit bias or inconsistency. Implementing policies that guide when to offer diversion or alternatives to incarceration can help ensure that similarly situated individuals are treated equally, regardless of background (National Institute of Justice, 2012).

However, discretion can also carry risks. Without accountability, prosecutors may unintentionally overcharge, rely on personal judgment in inconsistent ways, routinely plea-bargain cases, or contribute to racial and socioeconomic disparities in outcomes. Research has shown that disparities in bail, plea deals, and sentencing outcomes often stem not from blatant bias, but from uneven application of discretion across different offices or individuals (The Sentencing Project, 2020). To address this, some jurisdictions have introduced case review teams, decision tracking tools, or racial equity impact assessments to monitor outcomes and identify trends that may need correction.

Swift, Certain, and Severe

The principles of swift, certain, and severe are essential to the successful implementation of focused deterrence and strategic prosecution because they shape how consequences influence an individual's behavior (Mourtgos & Adams, 2020). Swift refers to the speed of legal outcomes, which reinforces the connection between the violent act and its consequences. If there is a delay between the offense and punishment, the deterrent effect weakens; especially for those individuals who tend to use short-term decision making. Certainty is considered the most important of the three principles and is considered to have the most substantial impact on deterrence (Mourtgos & Adams, 2020). Research has consistently shown that the likelihood of being caught and punished has a greater impact than the harshness of the punishment itself (Mourtgos & Adams, 2020; National Institute of Justice, 2014). Focused deterrence strategies rely on clear communication that violence will receive legal punishment, and prosecutors play a crucial role by following through on those consequences. Lastly, severity is delivering repercussions that can worsen based on

the seriousness of the offense and an individual's prior behavior. Strategic prosecution enhances these principles by focusing resources on the small number of individuals that commit the most violent crimes.

When applied together, these principles contribute to a focused, balanced prosecutorial strategy—one that prioritizes timely, predictable, and fair responses to violence. Real-world applications such as Boston's Operation Ceasefire and Oakland's Ceasefire strategy have demonstrated that combining these deterrence principles with data-driven prosecution and interagency coordination can produce significant reductions in gun violence and group-involved crime, without resorting to mass incarceration (Braga et al., 2001; McGarrell et al., 2010).

Federal vs. State Prosecution: Best Use of Each

In the context of focused deterrence, deciding whether to prosecute a case at the state or federal level becomes a strategic tool for delivering swift, certain, and fair consequences to high-risk individuals. Both systems offer legal pathways that can be used to reinforce the deterrence message: that continued violence will result in serious consequences. Prosecutors play a critical role in assessing which system can best achieve the intended impact based on the nature of the offense, the person's criminal background, and the possibility of community harm.

Federal prosecution is often used for high-priority cases involving repeat offenders, firearm possession by felons, or drug trafficking across state lines. Federal cases are prosecuted by U.S. Attorneys and investigated by agencies like the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), or Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) (U.S. Department of Justice, 2022). The federal system is often more structured, requiring grand jury indictments and adhering to the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which can result in longer and more consistent sentences compared to state outcomes. Federal courts generally have stricter rules about holding defendants before trial, especially for firearm and violent crime cases (U.S. Department of Justice, 2012). This reduces the chances of a high-risk offender committing further violence while awaiting trial.

State prosecution, on the other hand, allows more flexibility in how cases are handled. Prosecutors often manage a wider range of offenses—such as robbery, assault,

murder, driving under the influence (DUI), and local drug offenses (Law Offices of Randy Collins, 2024). State courts generally offer greater flexibility in plea bargaining and sentencing, including alternatives such as probation, diversion programs, or community-based rehabilitation. This allows state prosecutors to tailor responses to the offender's history and risk level, promoting rehabilitation when appropriate.

Federal prosecution is important for advancing focused deterrence strategies, especially in cases involving chronic violent offenders, gang-affiliated individuals, and felon-in-possession firearm violations. These cases often benefit from federal involvement due to longer sentences, mandatory minimums, and stricter pretrial detention standards, which can serve as strong leverage in both prosecution and deterrence. Focused deterrence relies on strategic partnerships across jurisdictions to identify and respond to the individuals committing the most violence. Programs like Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) reflect this approach by bringing together federal and state prosecutors, law enforcement agencies, and community stakeholders to deliver a clear message: violence will not be tolerated, and serious offenders will be held accountable. Through this interagency partnership, violent offenders are more likely to face swift, certain, and meaningful consequences (La Vigne et al., 2014; McGarrell et al., 2010; U.S. Department of Justice, 2021).

Ethical and Community Engagement in Prosecution

Being transparent and fair helps prosecutors build trust with the public, which is an essential part of focused deterrence strategies. Community trust increases the likelihood of reducing violence by encouraging cooperation, strengthening relationships between residents and the justice system, and reinforcing the credibility of law enforcement interventions. One important concern is avoiding over-prosecution, especially in cases involving low-level or non-violent offenses. Prosecuting too many people too harshly can lead to overcrowded jails and long-term harm to individuals and families. A smarter approach, that follows the focused deterrence framework, is to focus the toughest consequences on the people who are causing the most harm, while handling other cases with more balance.

This balance includes offering alternatives to jail time when appropriate. Programs like diversion, mental health courts, drug treatment, or restorative justice give people a chance to get help, take responsibility, and move forward—especially if they're not a

serious threat to public safety. These options can break the cycle of crime and are often more effective than punishment alone. By offering support instead of just punishment, prosecutors can make a real difference in people's lives while still protecting the community. Additionally, trust between prosecutors and the public is important. Prosecutors can build community trust by being honest about how they make decisions, listening to the concerns of residents, and working with community groups. When people feel heard and see that the system is fair, they're more likely to trust it and cooperate with it.

Finally, a successful focused deterrence strategy must include fairness for everyone. That means looking at how decisions are made—such as who gets charged, who is offered bail, or whether plea deals will be offered—and identifying any patterns of unfair treatment. If certain groups of people are being treated more harshly because of race, income, or where they live, that needs to be addressed. Fairness, transparency, and compassion are key to building a justice system that truly works for everyone.

Strategic Prosecution Applied Locally

The Fast Track Violent Crime Initiative (VTI), launched by Shelby County District Attorney Steve Mulroy in January 2024, demonstrates how Memphis is applying the core prosecution principle of swiftness in accountability. This focused, data-driven effort targets high-risk individuals involved in crimes such as murder, carjacking, aggravated assault with firearms, and other violent offenses (Shelby County District Attorney, 2024). VTI reflects a key feature of focused deterrence, prioritizing the small number of offenders causing the most violence, and fast tracking their cases by enforcing strict internal deadlines for case progression and strengthening pretrial measures such as GPS monitoring and immediate bail revocation upon re-arrest. The initiative is built on strong interagency collaboration, bringing together law enforcement, courts, and other criminal justice partners. By accelerating prosecution efforts, Memphis's VTI initiative aligns with focused deterrence strategies of swiftness and certainty. It is unclear, though, whether the focused deterrence principle of severity is applied by curtailing plea bargains to lesser charges as a way of resolving cases.

A gap in the Memphis focused deterrence program is a system under which prosecutors are automatically notified once a participant in focused deterrence picks

up a new charge. This has placed limits on the ability of prosecutors to apply the principles of strategic prosecution specifically to those who are on the focused deterrence list. Efforts are being discussed to address this gap.

Conclusion

As prosecution practices continue to evolve in response to the complexities of modern crime and community needs, the role of the prosecutor has expanded beyond the traditional boundaries of case management and legal procedure. Strategic prosecution—grounded in evidence-based principles such as deterrence, discretion, and collaboration—represents a forward-thinking approach that emphasizes both accountability and equity. This approach encourages prosecutors to focus resources on the individuals and behaviors that pose the greatest threat to public safety, while also seeking alternatives for those better served through rehabilitation or support services.

Moreover, integrating community engagement into prosecutorial strategies is critical for fostering stronger relationships between legal institutions and the communities they serve. When residents are informed about prosecutorial priorities and are invited to participate in shaping justice outcomes, the legitimacy of the system is strengthened. Focused deterrence relies not only on enforcement but also on the credibility of the justice system to influence behavior. Strategic prosecution, when implemented thoughtfully, becomes more than a crime control mechanism—it becomes a catalyst for sustainable, equitable justice. Through data-informed decisions, ethical responsibility, and interagency coordination, prosecutors are uniquely positioned to lead efforts that reduce violence, promote fairness, and reinforce the foundational principles of justice in a democratic society.

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SOCIAL SERVICES – PART 4

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Introduction

Social services are a key component of focused deterrence strategies, as they provide positive pathways for individuals to change their behavior and reduce recidivism. Focused deterrence itself is a strategy that combines targeted law enforcement with supportive interventions, aiming to reduce crime by clearly communicating consequences for continued offending while offering meaningful opportunities for positive change. These strategies bridge the gap between individuals and social services by designating lead agencies as a single, accessible point of contact to provide those services directly to individuals or connect them to other support services (Reichert et al., 2018). Services can include financial assistance, job training, food assistance, educational programs, and mental health or substance abuse counseling.

The City of Memphis has multiple local social services organizations, such as United Way's Driving the Dream, the University of Tennessee Health Science Center's Center for Youth Advocacy and Well-Being, the City of Memphis Office of Community Affairs' Manhood University, and Women Offering Women Support (WOWs), to name a few (City of Memphis, 2023). These local organizations aim to offer job support, expungements, counseling, and other supportive services. To guide individuals on the right path, it is essential for social workers and community organizations to work closely with those at risk to meet their needs, offer guidance, and create more accessible opportunities for personal and professional growth. This current review provides an overview of the social services in Operation Ceasefire in Boston, Massachusetts and examines social service providers in Memphis and Shelby County that are relied upon by the City of Memphis focused deterrence effort.

Operation Ceasefire in Boston, Massachusetts

To better understand the impact and integration of social services within focused deterrence strategies, it is helpful to examine successful models like Operation Ceasefire in Boston, which was the first program to implement focused deterrence strategies (Telep & Weisburd, 2012). This initiative demonstrates how coupling law enforcement with robust social service support can drive significant reductions in

youth and gang violence, and its pioneering role and subsequent influence on similar efforts across the country highlight the prominent role social services play in the effectiveness of focused deterrence.

Implemented in 1996, Operation Ceasefire was a citywide strategy aimed at reducing juvenile and gang firearm violence (Sheppard, 1999). The strategy was created by the Boston Police Department's Youth Violence Strike Force (YVSF), a multiagency task force of about 62 sworn officers, in partnership with the Massachusetts Attorney General and representatives from a wide range of organizations, including federal, state, and local law enforcement, parole and probation departments, the mayor's office, city agencies, clergy, and several universities. A research team from Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government evaluated this strategy and discovered that, after the second year of operation, there was a 71% decrease in homicides by persons ages twenty-four and under, as well as a 70% decrease in gun assaults for all ages (Sheppard, 1999). Furthermore, another research team revealed that Ceasefire was associated with a 57% decrease in the monthly number of youth homicides (Piehl et al., 2000).

The inclusion of social services was one of the key components required for Ceasefire to be considered fully implemented for a targeted gang (Braga et al., 2014). Social services, opportunities, and incentives were provided to gang members who wanted them. These incentives were intended to promote law-abiding behavior and encourage individuals to comply with the new enforcement policies (Zicari, 2021). Gang-outreach workers played a central role by connecting potential offenders with employment services and running programs that aimed to keep gang-involved youth positively engaged. Other practices such as Project Longevity in New Haven, Connecticut, and the Cincinnati Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV) also illustrate how focused deterrence strategies integrate social services alongside law enforcement efforts (Zicari, 2021). Like Operation Ceasefire in Boston, these programs demonstrate that coupling targeted enforcement with meaningful support services can create opportunities for lasting change and enhance the overall effectiveness of violence reduction initiatives.

Social Services as part of the City of Memphis Focused Deterrence Effort

The Tennessee Department of Correction (TDOC) defines recidivism as the return of individuals to incarceration within three years after their release (TDOC, 2022). In 2022, TDOC reported a decline in Shelby County's recidivism rate from 2006 to 2018. The recidivism rate for Shelby County currently stands at 24.5% (Gertler, 2025).

In response to this persistent challenge and as part of its focused deterrence initiative, the City of Memphis has partnered with a range of local organizations to offer supportive services aimed at reducing recidivism and improving community outcomes. This review highlights several of these key service programs operating within the city.

Government Reentry Support

The Shelby County Office of Re-Entry (SCOR) provides reentry resources through the partnership with TDOC and Shelby County Government (Mayor's Administration) (*Shelby County Office of ReEntry*, n.d.). It provides employment referrals, SNAP, anger management classes, substance abuse classes, child support, and many other essential services. It also provides driver's license assistance and job and vocational training programs, including small engine certification. Its goal is to reduce recidivism by connecting former offenders with the resources and support needed to meet their personal needs and secure meaningful employment.

Employment & Job-Readiness Programs

HopeWorks is an example of a local social services organization that offers prison and reentry services, job readiness training, adult basic education, and English as a second language (whyhopeworks.org, n.d.). In 2016, the Shelby County Division of Corrections (SCDC) recruited HopeWorks to provide its flagship program, Personal and Career Development, for the local prison system. Participants complete a 13-week course that includes classroom instruction, counseling, and mentorship designed to develop professional skills and essential knowledge needed to succeed in the workforce.

In addition to preparing individuals for meaningful employment after release, the program also offers access to the Hope 2 Hire initiative. The SCDC developed the Hope 2 Hire program to provide work readiness, life skills training, and career paths (e.g., building construction technology, forklift training and certification, and culinary arts) (hope2hire.org, n.d.). Upon successful completion of the program and release from SCDC, HopeWorks continues to support graduates by connecting them with critical resources, including ID services, basic necessities, job placement assistance, and further training opportunities. This is one example of current programs in the Memphis area that supports the social services in the broader context of focused deterrence.

Another job placement program is the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO), which provides individuals returning from incarceration with ongoing support to build career capital and achieve financial stability (Center for Employment Opportunities, n.d.). CEO offers job-readiness training, transitional employment, job coaching and placement, advanced training, and retention services. During the program's orientation, participants receive the documents, benefits support, and basic training they need to be prepared for work. After orientation, participants begin paid transitional work on CEO crews, where they gain real job experience, daily feedback, and coaching before moving into unsubsidized employment. Each participant is matched with a job coach who helps with resumes, mock interviews, and job searches, and then refers them to employers based on their skills and readiness. Once participants secure employment, they receive personalized ongoing support, including workplace counseling, crisis assistance, and career planning, along with incentives for meeting key employment milestones.

Community Events & Fairs

In addition to programs and organizations, the city also hosts community events and fairs for individuals to attend. The SCOR hosted the Second Chance Resource Fair, which helped justice-involved individuals return to life in the community and learn about opportunities (Davis, 2025). Furthermore, the event offered other resources, such as mental health support, workforce development, and housing.

Another event is the Erase & Elevate Expungement Clinic and Community Resource Fair hosted by the Shelby County Criminal Court Clerk's Office, partnered with various

local organizations. This clinic aims to provide an on-site expungement with no monetary fee or identification documents (Knox, 2024). Additionally, participants can get assistance with employment, housing, education, renewing or acquiring a new driver's license, SNAP benefits, etc. (Chaney, 2025).

Housing

In August 2025, a new transitional house in Shelby County, the Redemption House, opened to provide housing and resources for individuals recently released from incarceration (Copeland, 2025). Located in South Memphis, the facility offers support with job readiness and counseling. The Redemption House serves inmates from the Shelby County Division of Corrections who have completed, or are in the process of completing, hard skills training. However, there is a waiting list for this facility.

Education & Skill Development

For adults seeking to earn their high school diploma, the Goodwill Excel Center provides free courses designed to help individuals achieve their educational goals, along with opportunities to earn free college credits and industry-recognized certifications (Goodwill Excel Center, n.d.). If students have already completed high school coursework elsewhere, they can transfer those credits to the Excel Center. Additionally, placement tests are available to ensure learners are enrolled in the classes that best fit their needs. The Excel Center offers flexible morning and afternoon class options, supported by highly trained teachers. Beyond the free high school diploma, the Excel Center also provides free childcare, certified life coaches, accelerated courses, and transportation assistance.

Mental Health Services

Alliance Healthcare is a nonprofit organization that provides mental healthcare services and is the largest comprehensive behavioral health provider in Shelby County (Alliance Healthcare, n.d.). It offers outpatient mental health care, addiction recovery treatment, crisis support, and even youth-focused crisis services. Its services include individual; group and family therapy; counseling; peer support; medication-assisted treatment; and many other options to ensure flexible care across the city. The organization works to remove financial barriers by accepting major insurance plans and offering sliding-scale fees for individuals who are uninsured. Its staff collaborate

with each person to develop a personalized treatment plan that aligns with that person's circumstances, goals, and timeline.

Gaps in the Memphis Social Service Model

While Memphis has developed a network of supportive programs for justice-involved individuals, as of 2025, important gaps remain that limit the city's ability to fully implement a comprehensive focused deterrence approach. In addition to existing programs, the city faces challenges in several areas, including limited access to affordable housing, public transit, and insufficient comprehensive support for victims of crime. Addressing these gaps will be essential to strengthen the overall social service infrastructure and enhance the effectiveness of focused deterrence strategies.

While median income in Shelby County has increased in recent years and rental rates have stabilized, affordable housing remains a significant challenge. The City of Memphis estimates that approximately 44,000 rental units are still needed to accommodate low-income residents (Steimer, 2024). For the limited housing that is available, waiting lists frequently exceed one year. Homelessness and lack of stable housing are associated with an increased risk of recidivism for individuals released from incarceration or who are on probation (Jacobs & Gottlieb, 2020). Despite new initiatives such as the Redemption House, gaps in stable housing create broader community instability, which can weaken the effectiveness of focused deterrence strategies aimed at reducing violence and repeat offending.

Another critical barrier is the lack of reliable public transportation. The Memphis Area Transit Authority (MATA) has sought funding from the city government for years, but city officials have either denied requests or provided only a fraction of the requested support due to lack of resources (Burgess, 2024). These transportation limitations hinder access to employment opportunities and social service programs, contributing to instability for vulnerable populations. Residents have reported losing jobs or missing critical appointments due to irregular, canceled, or rerouted bus services (Thompson, 2024). Inadequate transportation infrastructure may increase the risk of involvement in criminal activity by limiting legitimate avenues for economic and social advancement.

Conclusion

Focused deterrence strategies are most effective when supported by a strong network of social services that addresses the needs of both justice-involved individuals and victims of violence. As demonstrated by programs in Boston and Memphis/Shelby County, partnerships among law enforcement, local organizations, and community stakeholders are critical to reducing recidivism and promoting long-term public safety. National examples like Operation Ceasefire, Project Longevity, and CIRV illustrate how coupling enforcement with social services can create meaningful pathways for individuals to change, highlighting the broader principle that these strategies require both consequences and opportunities for positive development.

Reentry services, such as those offered by the Shelby County Office of Re-Entry, HopeWorks, community events, and mental health services, provide essential support for individuals seeking a second chance. More broadly, a comprehensive approach to violence reduction must ensure that all individuals affected by crime have access to the support they need. Strengthening and sustaining these services, while addressing systemic gaps such as housing and transportation, will be key to building safer, more resilient communities across Memphis and beyond.

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