

# National Case Closed Project:

## Training and Technical Assistance (TTA) in Practice

### Summary and Purpose

The National Case Closed Project (NCCP), a Bureau of Justice Assistance initiative coordinated by RTI International, supports law enforcement agencies nationwide in improving their violent crime clearance rates, specifically for fatal and nonfatal shootings. RTI provides customized training and technical assistance (TTA) to these agencies based on an assessment of their current challenges and available resources to support them in improving their response to, and investigation of, fatal and nonfatal shootings. The NCCP assessment process includes the development of a report that describes the assessment's findings and provides a set of recommendations for changes that agencies could make to improve shooting case outcomes such as clearance rates, survivor perceptions of the investigative process, and the agency's ability to support a healthy and safe community.

As part of the TTA process, each site is assigned an NCCP TTA team member who will be their main point of contact throughout the implementation process. The assigned TTA team member will set up an initial meeting with the site to present each recommendation based on the level of effort and resources required to help the site prioritize the implementation. After this initial meeting, the TTA team member will meet regularly with the site to check in on implementation progress and address any pressing TTA needs by facilitating peer-to-peer meetings with NCCP sites and other community of practice agencies; sharing relevant standard operating procedures (SOPs) and other resources from peer sites; and connecting sites with NCCP subject matter experts. Agencies frequently noted that the TTA provided by the NCCP team gave them the necessary resources, peer connections, and training and networking opportunities to support them in successfully implementing their assessment recommendations.

The objective of this brief is to demonstrate how NCCP sites have adopted their site assessment recommendations and subsequent TTA to

"The most valuable aspects of the training and technical assistance provided was the connection to support and resources that helped us close the gaps in our investigative processes. This was specifically in the form of research and evidence-based practices and guidance provided by RTI as well as the connection they facilitated with other agencies in order to gain external perspective and model policies."

—Greensboro (NC) Police Department

strengthen their agencies' response to both fatal and nonfatal shootings. Figure 1 provides a roadmap that highlights select recommendations NCCP sites have implemented using NCCP's tailored TTA to improve crime scene responses, refine investigative approaches, and promote healthy communities.

**Figure 1. Roadmap of Recommendations**



## Coordinated and Comprehensive Response to Crime Scenes

### Updating Policies and Procedures

Recommendations focused on developing and implementing policies to ensure a coordinated and comprehensive response to all shooting-related crime scenes were among the most common assessment recommendations provided to NCCP sites. These recommendations are crucial for sites to implement as a low number of officers responding to shooting scenes makes it challenging to effectively perform every responsibility necessary at the scene and has been shown to reduce the likelihood that a homicide is cleared (Wellford et al., 2019).<sup>1</sup>

The NCCP Assessment Team found that both [Greensboro \(NC\) Police Department](#) (GPD) and [Salt Lake City \(UT\) Police Department](#) (SLCPD) should develop SOPs regarding their response to fatal and nonfatal shootings and implement more training opportunities on this topic for patrol officers. In addition to writing SOPs to address these recommendations, both agencies implemented patrol officer training on how to properly handle crime scenes prior to the arrival of detectives to better streamline the agencies' crime scene response. In response to their recommendations, [Riveria Beach \(FL\) Police Department](#) (RBPd) developed a procedural manual on crime scene response. This manual provided updated guidance to bolster and streamline investigators' and patrol officers' response to homicides, suspicious deaths, and nonfatal shootings. RBPd also developed a complementary checklist for both supervisors and their investigators to ensure consistency and thoroughness in their response to fatal shootings.

### Bolstering Crime Scene Response

To further support a comprehensive crime scene response, recommendations were provided to address a lack of consistency in the number of officers and specialized units that respond to crime scenes, as well as provide detailed direction for all units and individuals who are responding to the scene. To maintain coordination between the lead detective and crime scene investigators, GPD now requires both the lead detective and the assigned crime scene investigator to jointly review the evidence collected from shooting crime scenes when there is a large volume of evidence.

To learn more about digital evidence to support investigations, check out this NCCP brief, [Guidance on the Application of Digital Evidence in Shooting Investigations](#).

The intent of this new directive is to ensure that the lead detective has a complete understanding of all evidence collected and develops the best course of action for further analysis. To bolster its scene response, [Columbia \(SC\) Police Department](#) (CPD) hired additional crime scene investigators to include an additional supervisor and modified shift schedules to better align with investigators' schedules. To further build on its unit's capabilities and streamline processes, SOPs and training materials were updated and specialized and advanced training was provided to staff. These updates created a more cohesive team and increased team morale.

Another common recommendation from the NCCP site assessments directed sites to update their policies and procedures regarding general evidence submission, including digital evidence and National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) submissions and leads, and increase training for forensic and crime scene technicians. Multiple NCCP sites have strengthened their digital evidence capabilities by hiring additional staff, providing advanced training, and updating SOPs regarding digital evidence submission and processing. [Milwaukee \(WI\) Police Department](#) (MPD) now requires all Forensics Division personnel who respond to crime scenes to receive formal training and has established regular Forensics Division-wide meetings to increase communication. [Lansing \(MI\) Police Department](#) (LPD) now assigns an individual crime analyst to every shooting incident, both fatal and nonfatal cases, and is also responsible for sending out NIBIN reports and related information to strengthen the communication protocols surrounding NIBIN leads. To increase law enforcement agencies' use of crime gun intelligence, NCCP hosted the webinar, [Crime Gun Intelligence and NIBIN: Best practices in the management and analysis of crime gun evidence in shooting investigations](#), which discusses the role of NIBIN, crime gun intelligence, and crime gun intelligence centers in fatal and nonfatal shootings.

<sup>1</sup> Wellford, C. F., Lum, C., Scott, T., Vovak, H., & Scherer, J. A. (2019). *Criminology & Public Policy*, 8(3), 553–600. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-9133.12449>

## Investigative Strategies

### *Improving Training*

NCCP sites used various strategies to implement assessment recommendations aimed at improving their fatal and nonfatal shooting investigations and increasing their clearance rates. GPD and SLCPD recognized that training was a crucial first step in enhancing their respective agency's shooting investigations. GPD expanded and institutionalized its Criminal Investigations Division (CID) Academy and now requires all newly assigned CID supervisors to attend the CID Academy to learn more about the administrative responsibilities and management expectations of the position. Similarly, SLCPD revitalized an in-house Investigator Training Academy, which covers a variety of specialized topics necessary for effective investigations. Both training academies have been well received among attendees and supervisors are already seeing the impact of the training on investigators' techniques.

### *Creating and Leveraging Specialized Units*

Other NCCP sites have developed specialized units that are solely focused on investigating fatal and nonfatal shootings. Following its NCCP assessment, MPD restructured its Major Crime Unit and created a Gun Violence Division that now oversees the investigation of all nonfatal shootings and other gunfire-related crimes. CPD created a specialized Violent Crime Investigations unit tasked solely with the investigation of murders and attempted murders, the vast majority of which are gun related. Based on site recommendations, Waco (TX) Police Department (WPD) restructured and created a Homicides and Major Assaults Unit so that investigators assigned to this unit could focus solely on shooting-related cases. WPD has been intentional to incorporate its site recommendations into its department's strategic initiatives and hiring plans to include identifying new or expanding current staff positions, engaging additional teams and partners in weekly crime meetings, and exploring the creation of a Real Time Crime Center. By creating these specialized units, agencies have developed a singular focus, streamlined the investigative process, and increased capacity among the unit's investigators to solve these cases.

For more information on this important topic check out our [National Case Closed Webinar: Core Standards for Fatal and Nonfatal Shooting Investigations](#).

### *Embedding Crime Analysts*

Embedding crime analysts in investigative units has been another highly adopted method to enhance investigations among NCCP sites. MPD has embedded a crime analyst in its new Gun Violence Division to support investigations. GPD is in the process of reallocating and/or upgrading the crime analyst and investigative aide positions as "investigative analysts," which is a hybrid crime analyst/investigative aide role. Individuals in these positions will perform both analysis functions and investigative and intelligence responsibilities. To further support its shooting investigations, CPD has embedded a crime analyst to its nonfatal shooting unit and has reported large gains in efficiency within the unit because of this change.

## Fostering Healthy Communities

### *Increasing Victim Services*

A major focus for all NCCP sites has been implementing recommendations that improve their ability to foster healthy communities through increased victim services and community engagement efforts. MPD and [Roanoke \(VA\) Police Department](#) are in the process of hiring victim service providers and developing policies and procedures for their role in investigations and supporting victims. Following its NCCP assessment, GPD has hired two new victim service providers and developed SOPs that clarify the roles and responsibilities of the victim services position, when initial contact with victims and families should be made, and their expected documentation of outreach. GPD also developed the Victim Services Unit, which has enabled GPD to expand its advocacy efforts beyond homicides and now includes nonfatal shootings and other identified major crimes.

For more information on this important topic, check out our [National Case Closed Brief: The Role of Victim Services in Shooting Investigations](#).

## Promoting Crime Stoppers

Other agencies have worked on strengthening their engagement with the communities they serve to increase resident participation in investigations through promoting Crime Stoppers. LPD has promoted the use of Crime Stoppers through its Lansing 360 meetings, which occur weekly to bring together key community stakeholders, prosecutors, and private businesses to discuss various topics to reduce crime and curb violence in Lansing. MPD was featured alongside its community partner, Mothers Against Gun Violence, in the area's [local news](#) to discuss the impact of gun violence and how partnerships between law enforcement and the community can better support victims and co-victims of gun violence. SLCPD strengthened its outreach with community groups and has created opportunities for residents to get to know law enforcement officers to foster strong relationships. All these important efforts will ultimately lead residents to feel safer in reporting and sharing information, which will assist investigators in solving these violent crimes.

To facilitate these changes, the NCCP TTA team shared resources and connected sites with staff from the International Association of Chiefs of Police's Law Enforcement-Based Victim Services along with [Recommendations for Law Enforcement Agencies on Anonymous Tip Reporting Programs](#); set up meetings with NCCP team subject matter experts; and facilitated peer-to-peer meetings to include a visit with Chattanooga (TN) Police Department's Victim Services Unit and the city's Violence Prevention Program.

To learn more about building healthy neighborhoods through law enforcement and community partnerships, check out this [NCCP webinar](#).

## Conclusion

It is important to recognize that all NCCP sites have demonstrated a significant level of commitment to improving their response to, and investigation of, shooting incidents. The NCCP illustrates that improving fatal and nonfatal shooting clearance rates requires a multifaceted approach supported by strong agency engagement. Securing strong support from agency leadership is essential for the success of the NCCP sites. By embracing customized TTA, NCCP sites were able to implement evidence-based practices, refine investigative strategies, and strengthen both internal coordination and external partnerships. Key progress has included enhancing crime scene response protocols, implementing consistent evidence handling procedures, creating specialized investigative units, embedding crime analysts in investigative units, and implementing or expanding victim services. These reforms not only improved investigative outcomes but also fostered strong relationships between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

Sustained engagement from executive staff and continued participation in peer-to-peer learning remain critical to maintaining momentum and achieving long-term gains in the clearance rates of these crimes. The NCCP project team commends the substantial progress at each site and looks forward to evaluating their long-term impact on agency clearance rates. Visit [the National Case Closed web page](#) to learn more about the NCCP project.

## More Information

If you have questions or want more information on the National Case Closed Project, please contact us.

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