

Bronx Rises Against Gun Violence (B.R.A.G.)



A Public Health Approach To Combating Gun Violence

Fiscal Year 2018

The B.R.A.G. anti-gun violence program is based on the national, evidence-supported CURE Violence model. The model applies a public health approach to gun violence by interrupting its transmission, changing the behaviors of young people at the highest risk, and shifting community norms.

In FY 2018, Good Shepherd Services (GSS) operated at two sites in University Heights (West) and Williamsbridge (North). At these sites, violence interrupters and outreach workers strive to stop violence where it occurs, canvassing the streets and mediating conflicts. They outreach directly to young people who are at highest risk for committing violence, organize community events, and work to mobilize residents and other key stakeholders to send a message that violence is not acceptable in the neighborhood.

Fiscal Year 2018 Results

Of 77 participants enrolled for at least 6 months*

93 participants served



84% Are employed or in school



75% are no longer weapons carriers

Program Components



Cure Violence

The Cure Violence model has data-driven evidence of effectiveness. In New York City, the model has demonstrated a 63% reduction in shootings. The model has 3 components: (1) The interrupt component prevents retaliation and mediates conflict. (2) The reduce risk components assess high-risk, changes behaviors and provides treatment. (3) The community norms component responds to shootings, organizes the community and spreads positive norms.¹



Wrap-Around Programs

The **Education Vocation** specialist helps participants re-engage in school or find employment. **Justice+** is a research-informed GSS program co-located with B.R.A.G. that offers pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship training. **AGVEP** provides seasonal employment opportunities with stakeholders for CV participants.

To address trauma and mental health challenges, the **Therapeutic** workshops are offered for CV participants. The **Hospital Response** Program partners with local hospital to connect with gunshot, stabbing, or blunt trauma victims at the hospital to stop the cycle of violence.²

The **School Conflict Mediation** Program works in schools to improve attendance, academic achievement and reduce incidents of violence or other infractions in school or within the community. The **state-of-the-art B.R.A.G. recording studio** aims to bring kids off the streets and curb crime by teaching music industry skills and providing certifications and studio time.

Our Research-Based Strategies

We Invest in Our Communities.

Gun violence is a complex issue that requires innovation in communities where traditional approaches alone have not succeeded. In addition to the incalculable cost of lost and stunted lives, gun violence is damaging to impacted communities. It has tangible costs, like community disinvestment, and less tangible, such as the diminished sense of safety felt by individuals living in the community and quality of life and opportunity. Our model is not only backed by evidence linking it to reductions in shootings and an enhanced sense of community safety, but also has the potential for significant cost savings. It doesn't rely exclusively on traditional methods and the costly systems supporting it but rather it invests on a small group of credible community leaders working to change norms from within.³

We Change Behaviors of the Highest Risk.

Participants enter our program with a number of risk factors for committing violence. The majority of participants are weapons carriers which automatically qualifies them as high-risk. On average participants have 4.4 risk factors at baseline. We work with participants to decrease their total risk factors below 4.

Weapons Carriers	93%
History of Violence	89%
High Risk Street Activity	86%
16-25 Yrs.	65%
Street Organization	65%
Prison	37%

We Interrupt Violence.

Our violence interrupters (VIs) and outreach workers (OWs) are credible messengers. Meaning that they are from the communities in which we work allowing for unique access into community dynamics. The VIs, canvass the streets at peak hours for violence, mediate conflicts and prevent retaliations. Our OWs develop mentor relationships with the young people in the program, teach them alternative responses to violence and provide them with opportunities for a better future.

2,151

Hours Canvassed

1,070

Interruption Activities

282

Conflicts Mediated

We Shift Community Norms.

We recognize we cannot end gun violence on our own. For this reason, we continuously work to mobilize the community as a whole to stand against shootings in the neighborhood. Community events include food drives, family unity events, and community empowerment events.

9,459

Attendees at
Community Events

592

Meetings with Key
Stakeholders or partners

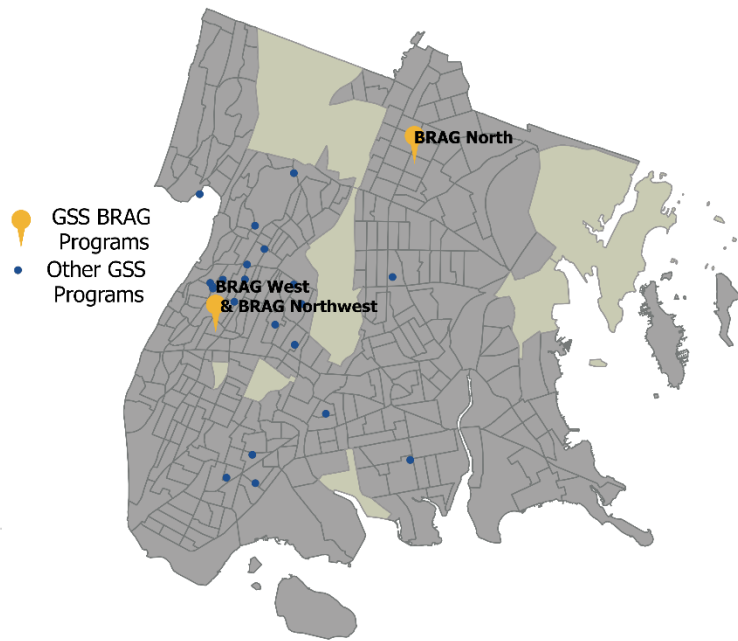
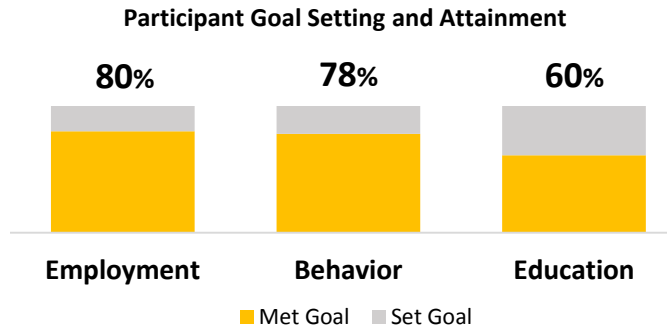
26,729

Public Education
Materials Distributed

*Statistics generated by comparing matched baseline and follow-up assessment for 77 participants

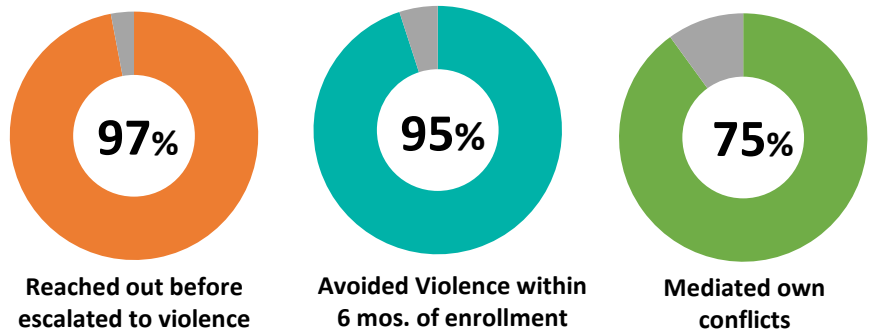
Participants Increase Protective Factors

Our participants steadily increase protective factors. The OWs help participants set and accomplish goals to decrease or mitigate risk-factors. Youth who set education or employment goals were more likely to increase their protective factors by finding a job or enrolling in school. Similarly, youth who set a behavioral change goal decreased their risk factors. **At baseline 86% of youth had 2+ risk-factors but at 6 months only 32% had 2+ risk-factors. Overall 78% decreased by at least 1 risk factor.**



Participants Disrupt Violent Response Cycle

Our participants have demonstrated the ability to avoid violence. Our team works closely with participants to break the cycle of violence by helping them to navigate conflict through mediation, avoidance, and preventive strategies. In a demonstration of our B.R.A.G. teams influence on behavior, nearly all participants avoided violence within 6 months of program enrollment and reached out to their OW before conflict further escalated. Three-quarters felt equipped to mediate their own conflicts.



Evaluation & Next Steps

Evaluation: GSS is a learning organization with a deep commitment to continuously strengthening its services. We actively solicit constituent feedback and engage staff, participants, and other stakeholders in conversations to learn from internal and external data, connect participant outcomes to evidence-based practices, and inform program modifications. For this reason, we administer a risk-assessment every 90 days to measure change in high-risk behavioral patterns, goal setting, and social-emotional changes that have been associated in the literature as protective factors for violence.⁴

Next Steps: The B.R.A.G. program is expanding. For FY 2019 GSS was awarded a new Cure Violence (CV) site on the 52nd precinct which includes the Kingsbridge Heights, Fordham, and University Heights communities, the site will be known as B.R.A.G NorthWest. The new site includes a Justice+ employment program and a Hospital Responder team. Additionally, to accommodate our growing number of constituents and team members, the program has relocated to two new state-of-the-art locations. B.R.A.G will continue to provide additional wrap-around programs to meet the needs of their participants.

Footnotes:

- 1 Slutkin, G. & Williams, C. We can Cure Violence. University of Illinois at Chicago, School of Public Health. June 2018.
- 2 Slutkin, G. & Volker, K. Cure Violence Hospital Response. University of Illinois at Chicago, School of Public Health. April 2017.
- 3 Butts, Jeffrey, et. al. "CURE Violence: A Public Health Model to Reduce Gun Violence." Annual Rev. Public Health. 2015
- 4 Office of the Surgeon General (US); National Center for Injury Prevention and Control (US); National Institute of Mental Health (US); Center for Mental Health Services (US). Youth Violence: A Report of the Surgeon General. Rockville (MD): Office of the Surgeon General (US); 2001. Chapter 4 -- Risk Factors for Youth Violence.