



Focused Deterrence Interventions: Common Challenges + How to Succeed

Focused deterrence is a proven violence reduction theory that has been demonstrated to significantly reduce gun violence. The focused deterrence approach to violence prevention includes identifying the individuals and groups driving violence, directly communicating consequences for continued violence, providing support and opportunities for change, and holding those who continue to shoot accountable.

However, despite the success of this approach, many police departments find focused deterrence interventions to be challenging and resource intensive. Guardian is experienced in implementing these violence prevention strategies, and can help you through these obstacles to ensure a successful implementation and a reduction in violence in your community. Here are some of the challenges you may face as you consider implementing focused deterrence, and how Guardian can help you achieve success:

1. Difficulty in Implementation and Sustainability

Challenge: Focused deterrence strategies are often seen as difficult to get off the ground, implement, and sustain as departments work towards continued reductions in violence.

Guardian Solution: Our team is experienced in both implementation and sustainability, and can support you through every stage as you add a focused deterrence intervention to your arsenal of violence prevention tools. We can help make sure that this strategy becomes a permanent part of your department and maintains the reductions in violence that you achieve.

2. Resource Intensive, Requires Strong Buy-in and Community Engagement

Challenge: With the major impact of a focused deterrence intervention, it may seem that your department needs a major investment of both resources (personnel, funding, etc.) and buy-in (from various stakeholders such as city officials, community organizations, etc.). It can also feel challenging to get the community on board with this new initiative.

Guardian Solution: We will work with your department to use the resources already in place to implement an intervention without the need for substantial investments. We will also help you to begin implementation with whichever partners are already on board, before expanding to those additional stakeholders as needed. Guardian understands the important role that community plays in this work, and can help your efforts to rebuild trust as you move forward.

3. Balancing Deterrence and Support

Challenge: The core of focused deterrence involves a "carrot and stick" approach, combining support and services with swift, but certain enforcement. However, it can be challenging to find the proper balance between these two parts, as police departments must convey a credible message of deterrence and support while also making sure they are not eroding community trust.

Guardian Solution: With our experience in communicating about focused deterrence, Guardian can work with your department on the proper messaging, as well as helping ensure your implementation strikes the exact balance needed to make the intervention a success.

4. Data and Intelligence Requirements

Challenge: A key piece of a focused deterrence intervention is correctly identifying the few high-risk individuals who are driving the violence. It can be difficult to compile, review, and constantly keep it updated to make sure the right people are always being targeted by the intervention.

Guardian Solution: Our team can support you as you conduct the shooting reviews that will guarantee you are always focusing your intervention on the people in your community driving the violence. Guardian can measure how accurately you are identifying the right people, and make any modifications to

your strategy to make sure you continue to find the individuals most at risk of shooting or being shot.

5. Ensuring Fairness and Avoiding Bias

Challenge: Critics of focused deterrence interventions often claim that they lead to the creation of “gang lists” which can be biased, unfair, or racist. Similarly, the direct communication to the high-risk individuals targeted by the intervention could potentially be interpreted as infringing on their civil liberties.

Guardian Solution: Guardian believes in the dignity of all individuals, including our partners, team members, clients, and their communities, and will work with your department to make sure that your intervention is being implemented with clear, defensible criteria that fosters community trust. We can help as you communicate the purpose and function of the intervention to the wider community.

6. Measuring Effectiveness and Demonstrating Impact

Challenge: Though there is evidence that focused deterrence is effective at reducing gun violence, it can be hard to definitively measure its impact and gather the tangible data needed to demonstrate its success and justify its implementation.

Guardian Solution: Our team can help you collect and communicate the relevant data from your intervention that will demonstrate your efforts and the impact it is having on violence in your jurisdiction.

While focused deterrence may seem challenging to implement and sustain, Guardian can support you through every stage of implementation, ensuring that you have a reduction in violence in your jurisdiction without compromising community trust.