

Office of Violence Prevention  
**ANNUAL REPORT 2022**

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**NEBRASKA**

Good Life. Great Service.

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**COMMISSION ON LAW ENFORCEMENT  
AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

## Contents

Introduction .....	3
The Office of Violence Prevention Advisory Council .....	3
Program Priority Focus.....	4
OVP Updates .....	4
SFY 2023 Grantees .....	5
SFY 2023 Solicitation .....	5
SFY 2023 Special Solicitation.....	5
Metropolitan Community College .....	6
Banister’s Leadership Academy .....	6
Lancaster County .....	6
City of Omaha .....	6
Completely Kids .....	7
Justice.....	7
NorthStar Foundation .....	7
PACE .....	7
YouTurn.....	8
Goals Center.....	8
Hall County.....	9
Nebraska State Patrol .....	9
Program Site Visits .....	10

## Introduction

The Director of the Office of Violence Prevention of the Nebraska Commission of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice is responsible for generating an annual report on the Office of Violence Prevention programs in Nebraska-by-Nebraska Revised Statute § 81-1450. This 2022 report is fulfilling this statutory duty.

The primary responsibility of the State Office of Violence Prevention is to help develop, foster, promote, and assess statewide violence prevention programs in the State of Nebraska.

The Office of Violence Prevention (OVP) aids privately funded organizations, local government subdivisions, and other community groups in developing Prevention, Intervention, and Enforcement theories and techniques.

Through a competitive grants process administered by the Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice (Crime Commission), the Office of Violence Prevention awards \$591,000 annually to organizations in Nebraska that have shown a history of documented success or new programs which show promise in helping to reduce violent crime in Nebraska.

The grant recipients are required to develop goals, objectives, and performance indicators to help evaluate the success of the financial distribution. Upon awarding of the funds, grantees are required to submit quarterly activity and cash reports to the Office of Violence Prevention/Crime Commission. Also, grantees are required to provide an evaluation report and a portion of the grant funds can be used for a professional evaluator. The report must provide a comprehensive review of the program's overall effort and measurable results during the grant cycle. Those results are provided to the Office of Violence Prevention

## The Office of Violence Prevention Advisory Council

In May of 2009, the Nebraska Legislature passed LB 63, establishing the Office of Violence Prevention within the Nebraska Crime Commission. A provision within LB 63 provided for the establishment of the Advisory Council to the Office of Violence Prevention. The Governor appointed Advisory Council is to meet quarterly and is directed to recommend – to the Crime Commission -- rules and regulations regarding fundraising, program evaluation, coordination of programs, and criteria used to assess and award funds to violence prevention programs.

### **The current board consists of:**

Brenda Beadle

Jason Dean

Karen Bredthauer

Scott Sasse

Tyler Cooper

## Program Priority Focus

The purpose of these funds is to address street and gang violence, homicides, and injuries caused by firearms as outlined in LB63 in 2009 (N.R.S. §81-1447 through 1451). In March 2015, the Nebraska Legislature passed LB 167 which also included the creation of youth employment opportunities in high-crime areas as an additional priority focus. The Legislature found that to effectively address these issues, communities must develop a multi-faceted approach that includes violence prevention activities, intervention, enforcement, and rehabilitation. Priority for funding is given to communities and organizations seeking to implement violence prevention programs that appear to have the greatest benefit to the state, and which have, as goals one of the three identified purpose areas.

1. Reduction of street or gang violence
2. Reduction of homicides and injuries caused by firearms
3. Youth Employment opportunities in high-crime areas

To be eligible **for this specific application** for Office of Violence Prevention funding, the applicant must be one of the following:

- Community-Based Agencies or Organizations, including Faith-Based Organizations.
- Community team.
- State Agency.
- Unit of local government (i.e., city, county, town)
- School District
- Federally or State recognized Native American Tribe
- 501(c)(3) Non-Profit Organization

Applicants without 501(c)(3) status must seek out an eligible applicant listed above to apply on their behalf as the fiscal agent.

## OVP Updates

Athena Sherman took over as Director of the Office of Violence Prevention in March 2022. The Crime Commission changed its grant software program to Amplifund starting in April 2022. Crime Commission staff worked with grantees to establish a smooth transition.

The SFY 2023 Solicitation cycle granted a total of \$503,259. A secondary special solicitation was made available in July to award the unused funds from SFY 2022 and SFY 2023, for a total of \$159,038.

In November 2022, the 2023-2025 OVP Strategic Plan was released.

## SFY 2023 Grantees

### SFY 2023 Solicitation

Grantee	Program Name	Location	Award Amount
Metropolitan Community College	Youth Forward Program	Omaha	\$81,000
Banister's Leadership Academy	Youth to Movement	Statewide	\$97,587
Lancaster County	Operation Tipping Point	Lincoln	\$90,194
City of Omaha	DNA Testing	Omaha	\$20,250
Completely Kids	Teen Employment Program	Omaha	\$20,997
Girls Inc.	After Hours Program	Omaha	\$61,711
NorthStar Foundation	Athletic Engagement & Outreach Project	Omaha	\$60,000
Police Athletics for Community Engagement (PACE)	PACE	Omaha	\$55,000
YouTurn	Make a 180 Against Violence Program	Omaha	\$16,520

### SFY 2023 Special Solicitation

Grantee	Program Name	Location	Award Amount
Completely Kids	Teen Employment Program	Omaha	\$22,003
GOALS Center	Family Advocate Program	Omaha	\$46,669
Hall County	JDAI Coordinator	Grand Island	\$43,203
Nebraska State Patrol	LEADS Software	Lincoln	\$43,203
Lancaster County	Operation Tipping Point	Lincoln	\$3,960

## Metropolitan Community College

Youth Forward Program (YFP) is a new program designed to meet the needs of at-risk youth involved with the juvenile justice system, a highly marginalized cohort that faces biases and barriers preventing them from living productive and healthy lives. YFP will cultivate safe spaces at select Omaha Public Schools (OPS) high schools to help connect justice-involved youth to academic and career success through mentorship and over 100 credit and non-credit program opportunities at Metropolitan Community College (MCC). Programming will incorporate blended education and training, access to meaningful career exploration and paid work experiences, job placement, relationships with caring adults, transition planning into postsecondary training or education, and wraparound support to remain on track and succeed. A range of incentives will be provided to students to help them remain focused and on track to high school graduation and postsecondary education and training.

## Banister's Leadership Academy

Y2M is an experiential learning program that provides youth employment opportunities, and personal and leadership development. Y2M is designed on the evidenced-based model: Career Launch Take Control which was developed by the national Boys & Girls Club of America. Students aged 14-18, provide peer-led programming, gain work experience, and receive a weekly stipend.

Y2M was established to extend the programming that we provide during high-risk weekend hours to youth in grades 7th-12th who are on their summer break and may otherwise be unoccupied. Mentees participating in the Y2M will participate in activities designed to build leadership and team-working skills. At least once a week, community leaders from diverse cultural and occupational backgrounds will speak and answer questions about their occupations, and their values, and tell the mentees how they got to where they are. The student will go on at least two outings during which they can demonstrate the values that learned over the course of the program. The program is an intervention against gang involvement, providing gang members an opportunity for employment using the evidence-based Drug Market Intervention Strategy and the Homeboy Inc. model. It is a prevention program using the Positive Youth Development model and the Career Launch Take Control model.

## Lancaster County

Operation Tipping Point (OTP) focuses on working directly with youth, ages 11-17, who are at risk of gang affiliation within Lancaster County. Operation Tipping Point has more than 20 community partners (including a direct partnership with 17 Lincoln Public Schools) and justice stakeholders. OTP addresses the increasingly violent crimes associated with gangs through intervention/prevention strategies. A full-time Gang Outreach Specialist serves as a link between primary and secondary prevention/intervention efforts and the engagement of community partners. The Gang Outreach Specialist is located within the Lincoln Police Department Gang Unit.

## City of Omaha

Gang and gun-related violent crime is a persistent problem in the Omaha metro area that devastates the lives of victims, their families, and the community at large. While there have been incredible strides made in decreasing gang and gun-related violent crime in recent years, especially in comparison with recent national trends, much more needs to be accomplished. DNA evidence from seized and recovered firearms is a critical tool to identify and apprehend suspects, provide conclusive evidence for linking suspects to

criminal weapons offenses, bolster the odds of conviction, and increase the likelihood that swift and severe sanctions will be levied against the perpetrators of gun violence. These efforts help OPD to remove violent repeat offenders from the community and decrease gang and gun-related crime over time.

### Completely Kids

Completely KIDS' Teen Employment Program (TEP) provides workforce development, professionalism training, goal setting and attainment, and employment opportunities for high school students in central Omaha. TEP provides participating young people with a healthy afterschool environment and equips them with workforce development skills and on-the-job training to improve their chances of successful education and long-term employment. For youth engaged in the program, TEP reduces the potential for them to succumb to peer pressure and be involved in unhealthy behaviors and street violence.

TEP will engage 25 students with ongoing mentoring and training in professional skills, and developing their leadership, planning, confidence, and other areas for success in the workforce and their future careers. Participating teens, in turn, work as Completely KIDS staff to provide vital afterschool enrichment activities to younger children at schools and community sites. TEP students work directly with Completely KIDS' senior staff to receive guidance and on-the-job training. Students attend educational workshops in areas such as resume-building and conflict management. Lastly, mentor meetings serve to guide teens towards goal attainment in academics, career, and social-emotional skills-building.

### Girls Inc.

Girls Inc. After Hours will offer a safe space for underserved teen girls to engage in healthy, pro-social activities during high-risk evening hours. During this time, girls will take part in sports and fitness activities, access Girls Inc.'s media lab for homework or STEM projects, and socialize in a flexible, comfortable environment designed specifically for girls.

Girls Inc. After Hours will take place primarily from 6:00-10:00 p.m. Monday-Friday throughout the year. Each day, after Girls Inc.'s regular out-of-school-time programming, concludes and the younger girls go home, the North Omaha Katherine Fletcher Center will remain open for teens in need of a safe place. By offering this fun, flexible program in which teens can feel ownership and independence, Girls Inc. can help to reduce girls' engagement with risky behaviors that could lead them to the juvenile justice system.

### NorthStar Foundation

NorthStar will enhance and expand its comprehensive sequence of athletic engagement and outreach programming for low-income, at-risk male youth in North Omaha in 2022-23. The research-tested model of targeted team sports outreach deployed by the AEOP has an established track record of reinforcing the engagement of participants in NorthStar's broader extended learning time (ELT) model and increasing their protective factors against violent gang involvement. In a period of continuing upheaval due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the requested OVP funding will be singularly vital for 2022-23 AEOP delivery: ensuring the use of family-centered and culturally responsive interventions, furnishing linkages to external school- and community-based behavioral health providers, and building longitudinal case coordination to support resilience and success of NorthStar boys in need.

### PACE

Police Athletics for Community Engagement (PACE) is seeking funding to support its mission of reducing street and juvenile gang violence, juvenile-related crime, and juvenile gang joining. PACE is a Police

Community Relations initiative based on a direct intervention and prevention model created to help “at-risk” and disadvantaged inner-city youth avoid the negative influences of street gangs, crime, and criminal victimization by choosing to be involved in safe, organized, athletic programs. PACE offers FREE athletic and educational programming to at-risk and underserved youth in Omaha. PACE is led by Captain Richard Gonzalez. Captain Gonzalez retired from the Omaha Police Department in 2016 to become the full-time Executive Director of PACE. Under Captain Gonzalez’s direction, PACE programming has seen tremendous growth in participation. In 2017 PACE had 2,710 participants in its free Soccer, Baseball, Basketball, CrossFit, Cheer, Flag Football, ACT Prep, and Educational Camp programming. In 2018, PACE logged 4,154 participants, a 53% increase over 2017. In 2019 PACE set another record of 5,894 youth participants, a 42% increase from 2018. And during 2020, even in a pandemic year, PACE had over 3,200 youth participants, and in 2021 PACE served just over 3,600 youth.

### YouTurn

YouTurn’s Make a 180 Against Violence program utilizes the evidence-based strategies of suppression, intervention, prevention, and education to deter violence and address the psychosocial needs of program participants. The goal of the prevention strategies is to “break the cycle of violence” by providing evidence-based teaching tools that focus on mediation, conflict resolution, anger management, healthy lifestyle choices, recognizing protective and risk factors, creating individual safety plans, and developing plans for academic and employment success. YouTurn targets neighborhoods with the highest incidences of homicide and gun violence and reaches the highest risk individuals – adolescents and young adults known to be involved in, or recently impacted by, acts of violence. YouTurn believes that youth are resilient, and with the right support, can choose to chart a new course of personal achievement and success.

### Goals Center

The purpose of the Family Advocate Program is to provide support to students and their families when absenteeism becomes a concern. Family Advocates provide an intensive case management system for students when school districts have exceeded their resources. In Traditional Services, Family Advocates work with students and their families on average for 6 to 12 months to ensure that a family has the resources and skills needed to continue to support their student’s regular school attendance. In the Engagement Outreach tract, Family Advocates work to re-engage students in school so that districts can implement their interventions therefore the length of service is generally between 60 and 120 days. Family Advocates collaborate with families by providing evidence-based assessments, and service plans that identify areas of strength and needs within the families, assessments are completed at regular intervals and service plans are reviewed monthly. With a multi-disciplinary, multi-agency, team approach, the program can provide comprehensive assessments, identify school barriers, and deliver interventions and services to students and families. Family Advocates, who are each assigned to specific students and families, provide supportive services via 1-1 meetings with students, parents, and school staff. These meetings focus on problematic areas, strengths, and progress toward goals. Assessments (i.e., the Ohio Scales, and North Carolina Family Assessment Scales) are used at intake and regular intervals thereafter to assess student and parent strengths, needs, and satisfaction. Collaboratively with caregivers, students, and community resource providers, an individualized service plan is developed for each student along with their family that incorporates assessment results and outlines specific goals and strategies. Family Advocates regularly review this plan with the student and caregiver and monitor progress regarding attendance. As alternate needs arise, Family Advocates work to connect families to community-based



resources that can provide additional support. Family Advocates provide regular reports and updates to the schools and the families regarding progress, and areas of need

## Hall County

The mission of Hall County's Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI) is to establish a more effective and efficient juvenile detention system. JDAI relies on eight core evidence-based strategies to engage in juvenile justice reform: Community Collaboration; Data Driven Decisions; Objective Admissions; Community-based Detention Alternatives; Case Processing Reform; Special Detention Cases; Reducing Racial & Ethnic Disparities; and Conditions of Confinement. The JDAI Program through the Annie E. Casey Foundation focuses on a framework of four strategies to reduce youth incarceration. The framework calls for juvenile justice systems to significantly and safely reduce the number of youths sent to court-ordered out-of-home placements, reform the standard of care so youths can realize their potential, replace youths' detention with more effective approaches, and reinvest savings into community-based alternatives. These strategies are further focused on race equity, specifically on youths of color, because they are the youths that are most likely to place in detention.

Hall County's JDAI has been in the planning stage for over a year, born out of Hall County's Through the Eyes of a Child group. Hall County committed to participate in the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI) and engaged in the JDAI community assessment. Key community stakeholders have been interviewed as part of this assessment to improve community-based juvenile detention alternatives, expand services, build capacity, and explore, develop, and implement new services. UN-Omaha's Juvenile Justice Institute (JJI) completed Hall County's Detention Utilization Study which includes conclusions and recommendations based on the study's results. Hall County's Commissioners voted to support the JDAI Coordinator's position during the 06/21/2022 meeting. Implementation of JDAI in Hall County will leap forward once the coordinator is hired, trained, and begins their focused attention on the Initiative.

## Nebraska State Patrol

LEADS (Law Enforcement Assistant for Dismantling Sex Trafficking) help law enforcement reduce street and gang violence. It is designed to help law enforcement and investigative agencies identify traffickers and see the full scope of trafficking networks to connect potential victims to services and hold perpetrators at the highest level of the trafficking organization accountable. LEADS was developed based on past collaboration with the Nebraska State Patrol (NSP). Most of these networks are associated with gangs. During initial development, a large network was discovered that was operating in Omaha. One investigator noted that the key individuals in the network were well-known gang members. Several of these individuals are now in prison. LEADS is an interactive platform relying on our sourcing (or "scraping") of a wide array of public commercial sex ads, social media, and other data to locate and predict probable gang networks of sex trafficking. The platform systematically iteratively connects data to proactively detect and fully identify these gangs and networks in a manner designed to assist law enforcement in the investigation, dismantling, and successful prosecution of key individuals.

Implementation of LEADS facilitates law enforcement agencies moving away from a reliance on sting operations and moving instead to an intel-based approach focusing their resources on high-risk leads provided by LEADS. LEADS identifies the entirety of the known network and focuses attention on high-impact areas of trafficking operations. HTI Labs will produce actionable leads to always populate the LEADS platform. This support involves actively analyzing and updating a network based on new information, seeking additional open-source information that is relevant to the investigation, writing

summary narratives, identifying key missing info, and answering investigator questions. This can also involve custom lead generation based on a case you are working on or a missing youth you are seeking to locate.

## Program Site Visits

Per the 2023-2025 OVP Strategic Plan, the OVP Director began conducting program site visits of the grantees. The purpose of the site visit is to further the relationship between the Office of Violence Prevention and the grant recipients. The Director can witness the program environment, speak with program participants, and gain insight into future funding needs.

All sites are required to have a site visit before the end of the fiscal year (June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023).

### 2022 Site Visits

Grantee	Date of Site Visit	Comments
Completely Kids	08/23/2022	Director Sherman met with program staff, toured the facility, and discussed future funding ideas. Completely Kids is a great facility with a comprehensive plan to keep children engaged.
YouTurn	08/25/2022	Director Sherman met with the program staff and toured the office. YouTurn is unique in its focus on gang-involved teens. They have a large-scale vision for future programs.
NorthStar	09/22/2022	Director Sherman met with the program staff and toured the facility. NorthStar has created a comprehensive plan for its male clientele. This included: Athletics, Academics, and Adventure. We discussed future gang-related training for their staff.
Girls Inc.	11/03/2022	Director Sherman met with the program staff and toured the facility. Their health services are commendable. Outside of their OVP-funded program, Director Sherman found their comprehensive sex education program to be forward-thinking.
PACE	11/10/2022	Director Sherman met with the program staff. We discussed their athletics program and the impact it's had on the community.
MCC	11/15/2022	Director Sherman met with the program staff, toured the facility, and met with program participants. Their new Youth Forward Program is a multi-faceted plan focused on setting up a stable and attainable future for young adults.