

**MEMORANDUM
COUNTY OF ERIE
OFFICE OF THE ERIE COUNTY EXECUTIVE**

TO: Mark C. Poloncarz, Erie County Executive
Jennifer Hibt, Chief of Staff

FROM: Andrew McLaren, Special Assistant to the County Executive

DATE: June 20, 2022

RE: Status report on the Erie County Gun Violence Prevention Task Force

The Erie County Gun Violence Prevention Task Force (“the Task Force”) was created in July 2021 by Erie County Executive Order #22 (“the Order”), which declared gun violence to be a public health crisis. The Task Force has been working diligently since then to address the Order’s key objectives. The Erie County Commissioners of Central Police Services, Probation, Health, Mental Health, and Social Services collaborate on the Task Force with local law enforcement including the Erie County Sheriff’s Office and Buffalo Police Department (“BPD”), the Erie County District Attorney’s Office, members of the Erie County Legislature, local anti-violence organizations and leaders, and the Live Well Erie Task Force.

The Task Force is charged with preparing programs and initiatives addressing six areas of concern:

- decrease gun violence among youth;
- increase funding to programs specifically designed to reduce gun-violence;
- work with local law enforcement agencies to create strategies to reduce the number of illegal firearms in Erie County;
- work with marginalized populations to provide education on gun violence, issues and solutions;
- advocate for relevant policies that improve health in communities of color; and
- support local, State, and Federal programs that advance anti-gun violence initiatives.

This report is intended to provide you with an update on the activities and achievements of the Task Force through May 2022.

As per the Order the Task Force **increased funding to the GIVE program**, allowing the Erie County Probation Department to increase the number of visits made to homes. GIVE data from the DCJS Monthly GIVE Shooting Activity Report comparing the period of January – March 2021 to the same period in 2022 in the BPD shows a decrease of 24 shootings in 2022, as well as 22 fewer shooting victims and 6 fewer individuals killed by a firearm, leading NYS in all these categories. Other local law enforcement agencies participating in the GIVE program include the Buffalo Police Department, the Erie County District Attorney’s Office, the Erie County Sheriff’s Office, and Erie County Central Police Services.

Additionally, the Task Force expedited an additional \$530,727 in funding received by Erie County from NYS to expand the 2021 **Summer Youth Employment Program (“SYEP”)** to have a focus on gun violence prevention in targeted zip codes throughout the City of Buffalo. This critical funding allowed 73 additional youth to engage in a 16-week program, working 25 hours per week at the rate of \$15.00 per hour. The SYEP focuses on at-risk youth ages 14-24 with a specific focus on youth either involved with or at-risk of gun violence. Partnering with the Stop the Violence Coalition, the Task Force designed specific work site locations to provide employment opportunities for these youth during the hours of 4 PM – 9 PM; these hours were selected due to the amount of increased activity that occurs in many of these youths’ neighborhoods at these times. The work sites incorporated classes in conflict resolution, anger management, and non-violence training as well as providing meaningful mentorship to gang-involved or at-risk youth. The extra funding also assisted the SYEP in extending its programming through December of 2021, as it traditionally would end in September.

At the time the Order was issued in July 2021 there were 36 shooting incidents recorded in the City of Buffalo. Pursuant to these steps taken by the Task Force and in conjunction with other law enforcement strategies implemented by NYS, ECSO, and BPD and other local law enforcement agencies the number of shooting incidents decreased to 25 recorded shooting incidents in the following month. Shooting incidents would not reach July’s number for the rest of the year.

The Task Force resumed regular meetings in February 2022 with new addition Kelly Wofford, Director of Erie County’s Office of Health Equity, and has since been meeting bi-weekly to address the objectives outlined in the Order. The Task Force’s first recommendation in 2022 was to supplement funding to the SYEP to ensure critical programming for youth at risk of gun violence will continue in the summer of 2022. The Erie County Legislature approved a county-funded \$1.1 million expansion of the Department of Social Services’ Summer Youth Anti-Violence Program in May 2022. Since July 2021 over 5,150 local youth have participated in the program.

Efforts to create closer collaborations with the City of Buffalo are bearing fruit as well. A

recent meeting with City of Buffalo Special Project Manager of Crime Prevention Ron Dixon to discuss collaborations between City and County government on special initiatives to prevent gun violence in the City of Buffalo, where the most impacted communities of color are located, has resulted in a growing partnership. The Task Force has linked Ron with the Erie County Department of Environmental Planning to assist in their Community Tree Planting initiative:

- **Community Tree Planting Initiative** – Evidence-based research draws a direct correlation between high crime and low vegetation (trees, bushes, and shrubs). The data suggests that higher rates of crime are found where there are no trees and vegetation and that the opposite is also true: where there is an abundance of trees and vegetation there are lower crime rates. This initiative is an opportunity to plant more trees and increase vegetation in targeted areas with the overall goal of crime reduction.

Additionally, the Task Force will invite Ron to attend future meetings in anticipation of possible collaborations on future initiatives with the agreement that Task Force representatives will in turn attend the City of Buffalo's crime prevention meetings and will also partner with Should Not Use Guns ("SNUG") and Buffalo Rising Against Violence at ECMC ("BRAVE") on initiatives where possible. BRAVE is the region's only hospital-based violence intervention program (HVIP) and SNUG is New York State's program that treats gun violence as a public health issue and addresses the trauma individuals face due to long-term exposure to violence using credible messengers and providing services to improve lives and strengthen neighborhoods impacted by crime.

Task Force representatives also recently met with the Director of the New York State Office of Gun Violence Prevention, Calliana Thomas, to discuss future collaborations and Town Hall events for Erie County residents to discuss gun violence prevention strategies.

The Task Force is also working on our own initiatives and has secured three hundred gunlocks to distribute to Erie County residents. Discussions with local community organizations and local clergy groups, as well as with the Erie County Executive's Office, are underway as the planning process for the most efficient distribution of these gunlocks is finalized

Elsewhere, **the Task Force is now partnering with the University of Buffalo School of Social Work to create an environmental scan** which will integrate mapping of gun violence "hot spots" in the community with mapping of assets and resources associated with gun violence prevention and recovery. This mapping initiative is now underway.

In order to make more informed decisions on creating initiatives and strategies to prevent gun violence, as well as funding programs to prevent gun violence moving forward, **Task Force members met with representatives from "Everytown For Gun Safety"** and have scheduled the gun violence prevention organization to present to our group on gun violence in our nation

with a focus on discussing initiatives with local community partners that have had evidenced-based success. That presentation will take place on July 11 and will coincide with new members joining our Task Force. Invitees to this special presentation include members the ECSO, Erie County Legislature, ECDAO, City of Buffalo, BPD, Peacemakers, and others.

In conclusion, the Task Force will continue to work towards the objectives listed in the Order and will be expanding to include new members in order to build a broader coalition of community advocates, law enforcement agencies, and government representatives focused on eliminating gun-involved violence.

Gun Involved Violence Elimination (GIVE)

January - March 2022 vs. 2021

	2021 YTD	2022 YTD	% Change 22 vs. 21
Shooting Incidents Involving Injury	219	209	-4.6%
Shooting Victims (Persons Hit)	248	237	-4.4%
Individuals Killed by Gun Violence	41	43	4.9%

January - March 2022 vs. 2021

GIVE Jurisdiction	Shooting Incidents			Shooting Victims			Individuals Killed by Firearm		
	2021 YTD	2022 YTD	Change From 2021	2021 YTD	2022 YTD	Change From 2021	2021 YTD	2022 YTD	Change From 2021
Rochester City PD	55	55	0	66	65	-1	10	15	+5
Buffalo City PD	63	39	-24	72	50	-22	16	10	-6
Syracuse City PD	25	24	-1	25	25	0	1	1	0
Suffolk County PD	6	17	+11	6	17	+11	1	5	+4
Albany City PD	11	14	+3	15	14	-1	2	0	-2
Troy City PD	3	14	+11	3	18	+15	0	3	+3
Niagara Falls City PD	9	9	0	9	9	0	3	1	-2
Nassau County PD	1	6	+5	3	6	+3	0	1	+1
Utica City PD	8	5	-3	8	5	-3	1	1	0
Hempstead City PD	6	4	-2	6	4	-2	1	1	0
Mount Vernon City PD	6	4	-2	6	4	-2	0	1	+1
Newburgh City PD	7	4	-3	7	5	-2	0	0	0
Poughkeepsie City PD	1	3	+2	1	3	+2	1	1	0
Yonkers City PD	4	3	-1	6	4	-2	2	2	0
Schenectady City PD	6	2	-4	6	2	-4	0	1	+1
All Other GIVE PDs *	8	6	-2	9	6	-3	3	0	-3
Total GIVE	219	209	-10	248	237	-11	41	43	+2

* All other GIVE PDs includes : Binghamton City, Jamestown City, Kingston City, Middletown City, and Spring Valley Village PDs.

Current year data is preliminary and subject to change.

Source: DCJS, Monthly GIVE Shooting Activity Report Form (4/8/2022)

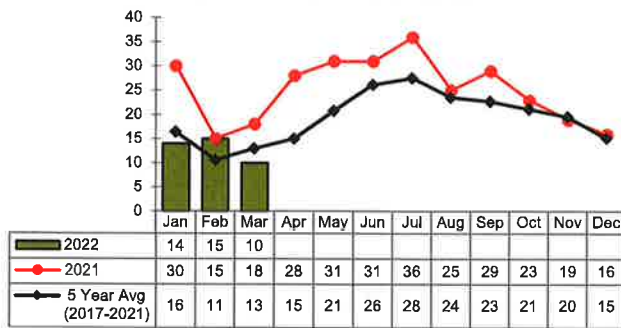
Buffalo City PD

January - March 2022 vs. 2021

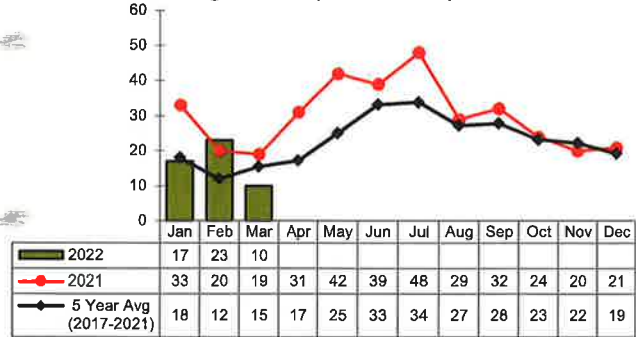
As of 4/8/2022

	5 Year Average YTD (2017-2021)	2021 YTD	2022 YTD	% Change	
				22 vs. 21	5 Yr. Avg vs. 2022
Shooting Incidents Involving Injury	40	63	39	-38.1%	-2.5%
Shooting Victims (Persons Hit)	45	72	50	-30.6%	10.1%
Individuals Killed by Gun Violence	10	16	10	-37.5%	-2.0%

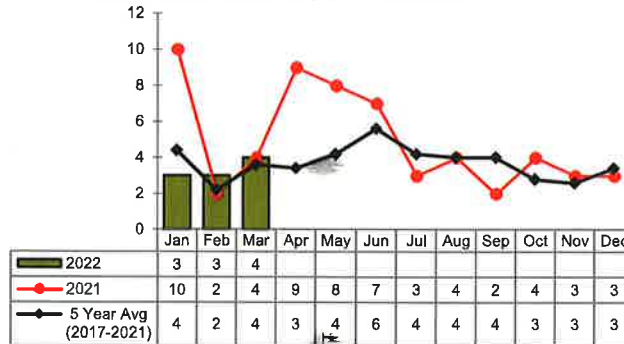
Shooting Incidents Involving Injury



Shooting Victims (Persons Hit)



Individuals Killed by Gun Violence



Current year data is preliminary and subject to change.