# Addressing Crime & Violence Through the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) Framework in St. Louis City: A Report to the St. Louis Area Violence Prevention Collaborative (STLVPC)

## Preliminary Executive Summary

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**Prevention Collaborative (STLVPC)**

**Executive Summary**

**Introduction**
The St. Louis area continues to experience higher rates of violence than the nation overall. The St. Louis Area Violence Prevention Collaborative (STLVPC) is charged with: 1) reducing violent crime in the region by coordinating and supporting services and interventions; and 2) serving communities at risk of violent crime. To assist STLVPC with their goals, the Center for Advancing Correctional Excellence (ACE!) at George Mason University (GMU) implemented the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) methodology to assess existing programs' capacities and services to address violence and crime reduction efforts. The goals of this study were to: 1) identify programs and services that aim to reduce violence; 2) determine the needs of individuals to reduce violence; and, 3) identify gaps in services to allow for a more efficient and effective allocation of resources. This study focused on identifying the areas where St. Louis City could build a resilient service delivery system to prevent and reduce violence and crime.

The RNR simulation methodology provides a structured analytical approach to understanding the characteristics of the population, both general and justice-involved, and assessing the best approaches to reduce violence and crime. This approach integrates the concepts supporting justice reinvestment efforts and evidence-based practices and treatments. An emphasis is on identifying and targeting protective factors for violence and/or crime, and address risk factors. Data were gathered from: 1) the Missouri Department of Corrections (DOC) for risk-needs information of adults on community supervision in St. Louis area; 2) the Missouri Family Court-Juvenile Division for risk-needs information on youth involved in the judicial or child welfare systems; 3) various secondary data sources to identify the risk and need factors of the general adult and youth populations; and 4) program tool surveys for 112 adult and youth programs in the St. Louis region.

The main report provides a detailed discussion of the methods and data sources, as well as the results for the service models. This executive summary provides an overview of the findings. The estimates are based on the available data, and we have identified areas where challenging data issues exist. We have then provided alternative estimates to explore a range of responses that might better serve the system in obtaining the goals of violence reduction. This executive summary examines impact at three levels: 1) individuals' risk and need factors that are or are not addressed; 2) service providers, program needs and capacity; and, 3) system-level factors that support a comprehensive approach to violence reduction.

**Risk-Need-Responsivity**
The Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) framework is typically referred to in the justice setting but the core concepts are similar to health and social welfare models that emphasize targeting prevention and intervention services to address factors that contribute to violence and/or crime. The RNR framework generally states that services should address a myriad of risk factors including involvement in the justice system, substance abuse, mental health challenges, lifestyle

issues, interpersonal conflict, neighborhood disorder, and so on.  The framework then compares the needs of the population versus the available services.  It is designed to strategically identify services, whether they are for the individual, communities, neighborhoods, or target populations such as those in the justice system.  This framework is well accepted by health and justice perspectives.

## 1.  Summary of Findings

### A. Need for More Treatment and Programming in St. Louis

Service providers completed the RNR Program Tool surveys to identify prevention and treatment service programs available and the number of clients served annually by these programs.  In total, 112 organizations completed one of the tools:  Program Tool for Adults, 43 (23% response rate), Victim Category Tool, 19 (28% response rate) and Youth Category Tool, 50 (34% response rate).  The on-line *Program Tool for Adults* has a built-in assessment of the adherence to evidence-based practices and treatments, which provides program quality feedback.  To conduct our gap analyses, the Assess Jurisdiction's Capacity methods use aggregate client level risk-needs data and capacity data from the program tools.

In general, the St. Louis City area would benefit from expanding services to prevent and treat violence and crime producing factors.  In all areas of violence prevention efforts, a different configuration of services is needed:  community initiatives, individual approaches, school-based interventions, and justice strategies.  Many different types of programs should be expanded to better serve the population including Life Skills (e.g., high school, GED classes, vocational programming, financial management and employment readiness); Decision Making to improve cognitive restructuring, address distortions, and change maladaptive thinking, and to address cognitions that support crime and violence; Self-Management programs to prevent relapse, manage risky situations, and manage daily routines; and Interpersonal Skills programs to improve social, communication and conflict resolution skills.  Some specific examples of these needs are:

- General Adult Population:  Nearly 44% of the population would benefit from Life Skills programming while the current capacity serves 7% of the population.
- Adult Community Supervision:  Around 33% of the population needs Decision Making programs to address violence and cognitive distortions.  Currently, no programs address this need.  And, nearly 35% of supervision clients need Self-Management interventions.
- General Youth Population:  Nearly 46% of the population would benefit from Life Skills while there is only a capacity to provide services to 5% of the population.  A major need is to prevent the high rate of high school drop-outs, with more services and interventions for primary and middle-school children to secure greater high school completion.  This can be a protective factor to address violence issues.
- Juvenile Justice/Child Welfare Population:  Nearly 42% of the population would benefit from Interpersonal Skill development while there is only a capacity to provide for 4% of the population.

### B. General Adult Findings

- Need Issues:  Some of the prominent issues are poverty or financial difficulty (27%), mental health issues (19%), and a lack of a high school diploma (16%).

- Available Programs:  In total, 55 programs completed the *Program Tool for Adults* that serve the general adult population (Non-SUP Programs).  The programs were classified as:  Severe Substance Use Disorders (2 serving 3,130 people); Decision Making (no available programs); Self-Management (16 serving 12,240 people); Interpersonal Skills (9 serving 2,000 people); Life Skills (17 serving 15,810 people); and Other (11 serving 2,960 people).
- Program Quality:  The Program Tool for Adults rates programs on their adherence to evidence-based practices with a range of 0 (low quality) to 100 (high quality).  Except for SUD programming, the overall quality scores are lower than one would desire.  Non-SUP programs performed well in responsivity (44%), which tailors programming to specific needs of the individuals.
- Gap Analysis:  The Assess Jurisdiction's Capacity methods compares need information data to the available programming.  As shown in Exhibit 1, there is a need for more programming in Self-Management, Interpersonal Skills and Life Skills for the general adult population.

**Exhibit 1:  General Adult Population Gap Analysis**
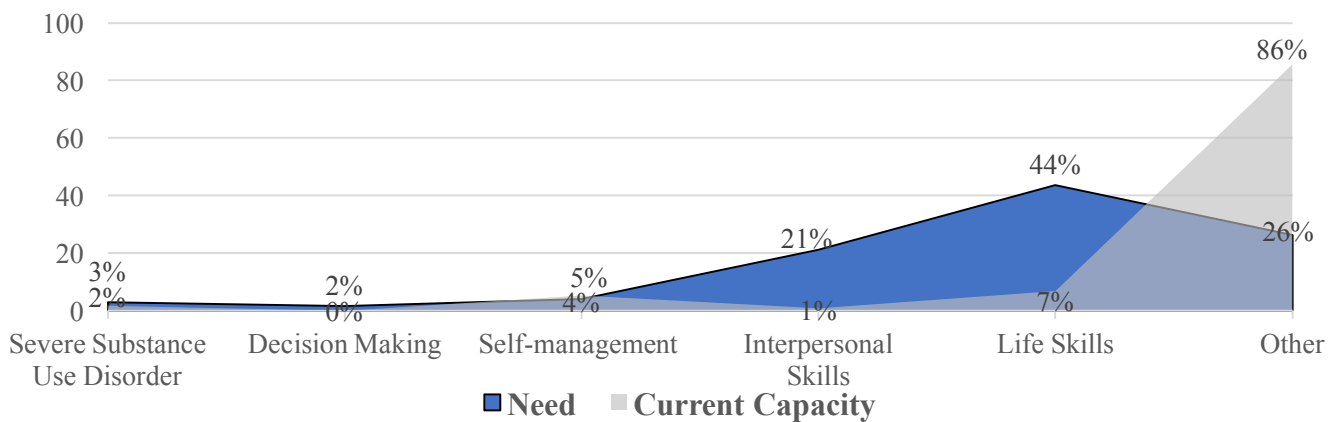


**C. Adult Community Supervision Findings**
- Need Issues:  Some prominent needs are alcohol/marijuana use (82%), unemployment (41%), and criminal lifestyles/cognitive distortion issues (24%).
- Available Programs:  In total, 20 programs completed the *Program Tool for Adults* that serve the adult community supervision population (SUP Programs).  The programs were classified as:  Severe Substance Use Disorders (2 serving 1,500 people), Decision Making (no available programs); Self-Management (6 serving 3,130 people); Interpersonal Skills (2 serving 280 people); Life Skills (7 serving 1,030 people) and Other (3 serving 230 people).
- Program Quality:  SUP programs performed well in responsivity (63%), which is addressing a target behavior, and structure (51%), which refers to using controls in programs.  Dosage (duration of time in a program) was the lowest score at 17%.
- Gap Analysis:   As shown in Exhibit 2, there is a slight need for more programming in Severe Substance Use Disorders but a more pronounced need for Decision Making and Interpersonal Skill programming.

**Exhibit 2: Adult Community Supervision Population Gap Analysis**
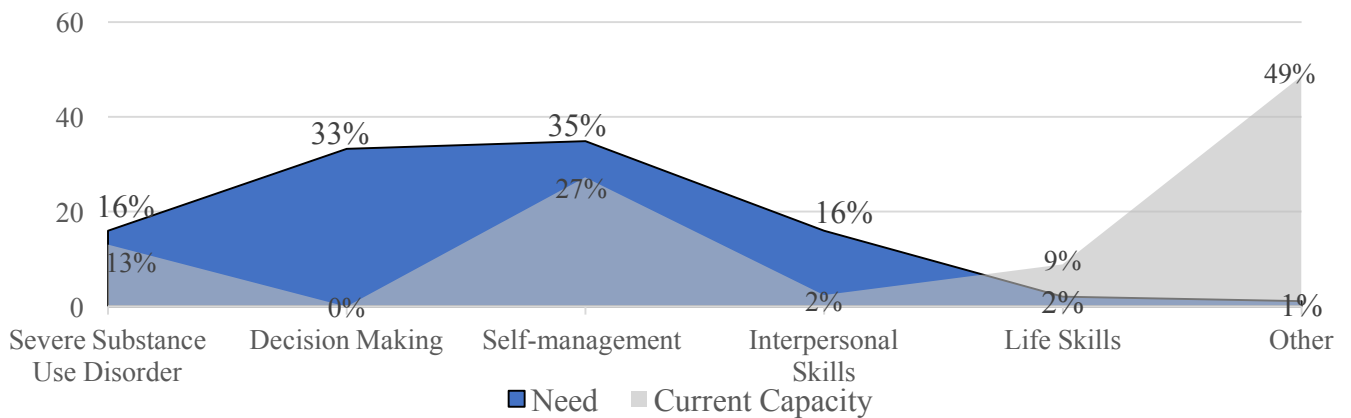


## D. General Youth Population Findings
- Need Issues: Some prominent needs are youth at-risk for dropping out of high school (28%), financial difficulty (22%), and mental health issues (11%).
- Available Programs: In total, 55 programs completed the *Youth Category Tool* that serve the general youth population. The programs were classified as: Severe Substance Use Disorders (14 serving 10,010 people); Decision Making (1 serving 300 people); Self-Management (14 serving 8,460 people) Interpersonal Skills (7 serving 4,450 people); Life Skills (14 serving 3,560 people); and Other (5 serving 2,940 people).
- Gap Analysis: As shown in Exhibit 3, there is a need for more programming in Interpersonal Skills and Life Skills.

**Exhibit 3: General Youth Gap Analysis**
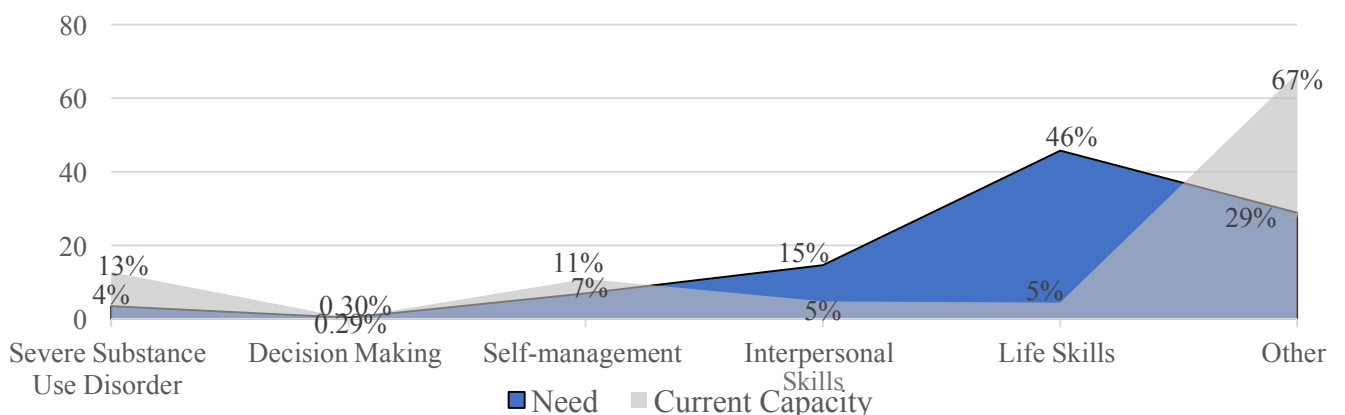


## E. Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare Findings
- Need Issues: Some prominent needs are having justice-involved family/friends (64%), public shelter dependence (17%), and a delinquent/criminal lifestyle (21%).

- Available Programming:  In total, 22 programs completed the *Youth Category Tool* that serve the juvenile justice and child welfare population.  The programs were classified as: Severe Substance Use Disorders (7 serving 90 people); Decision Making (no available programs); Self-Management (7 serving 265 people); Interpersonal Skills (1 serving 55 people); Life Skills (6 serving 145 people); and Other (1 serving 75 people).
- Gap Analysis:  Exhibit 4 shows the gap analysis. To prevent crime and violence, more services are needed for Severe Substance Use Disorders, Decision Making, and Interpersonal Skills.  Youth could benefit from social and interpersonal skill building interventions.

**Exhibit 4:  Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare Gap Analysis**
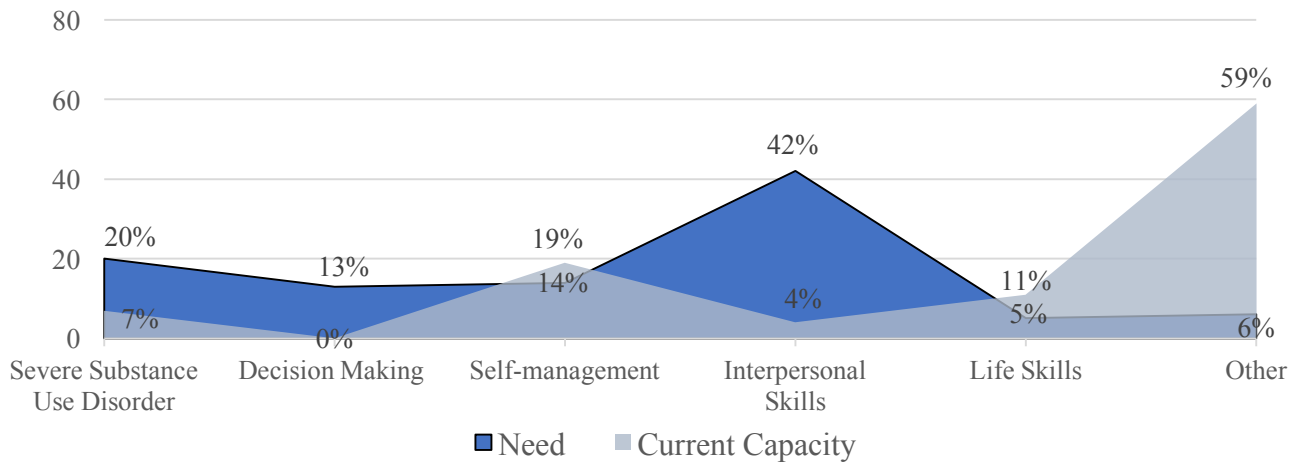


## 2.  Discussion of Recommendations

### A. Focus on Violent Offenders

Targeting known violent offenders, their social networks, and formerly justice-involved violent offenders is important to address violence related issues in the St. Louis area.  The DOC identified nearly 2,100 violent offenders on adult community supervision.  Of the 2,100 violent offenders identified by DOC, nearly 34% of the population would benefit from Decision Making programs and 34% would benefit from Self-Management programs.  Few programs exist for this target population.

### B. Improving Program Quality

The RNR methodology examined the quality of the programs and services that are available to prevent or treat the needs of those involved in violence and crime.  Programs consistently scored low on many program quality measures, which indicates the need for expanded use of evidence-based practices. It is important to address these issues to ensure positive results from programming.

### C. Need for Better Data Measures

The available epidemiological data to understand the violence prevention needs are limited, and should be expanded.  Better data is needed including the use of a risk and needs assessment tool in justice agencies, use of diagnostic tools in service and treatment agencies, and program fidelity measures.  A need exists for:

- Better indicators of individual level data regarding involvement in the justice system, protective factors, mental health, crime and risky behaviors, housing stability and financial needs.
- A household survey is recommended to expand the data on violence and crime prevention needs for the general population. Identifying the needs of the population would allow for better tailoring of programming.

**D. Implement Effective Violent Prevention and Intervention Strategies**

In an era of mass incarceration, policy makers have implemented ineffective long prison sentences as a strategy to prevent violence. Many violent offenders who are sentenced to long-term incarceration are apathetic about treatment, so they never face their underlying issues of their proclivity to engage in violence (Council of State Government, 2017). Violence prevention must acknowledge how trauma and exposure to violence perpetuates a cycle of violence (Urban Institute, 2017). Effective violence prevention and intervention strategies include individual approaches (e.g., multisystemic therapy, treating antisocial thoughts, building resiliency, promoting prosocial behaviors, RNR supervision, and treating severe substance use disorders), criminal justice strategies (e.g., focused deterrence with services, and use of RNR supervision models), school-based interventions (e.g., targeting high-risk youth and neighborhoods), and community initiatives (e.g., Business Improvement Districts, use of outreach workers). It will take a joint effort of these initiatives to reduce violence.

**E. Recommendations for STLVPC**

The STLVPC has an important role in organizing programs and services to create an integrated effort to advance violence reducing efforts. The following recommendations will assist this initiative:
- Maintain a database of service providers by various categories to better serve the population.
- Encourage providers who completed the Program Tool for Adults to review their program quality recommendations and to make program adjustments when possible.
- Develop interagency collaborations to create a service network. This includes inviting programs and services to work together to improve outcomes and better serve the population.
- Develop an *Academy* where service providers can learn skills to prevent violence and crime, and to improve the use of evidence-based practices and treatments.
- Work to expand programming in the areas of Decision Making, Life Skills and Self-Management.
- Integrate social justice and trauma-informed care into programs and services to address intergenerational issues that affect violence and offending.