



THE MINNESOTA GUN VIOLENCE RESEARCH SUMMIT

Empowering Change through Research and Collaboration



**VIOLENCE
PREVENTION
PROJECT**

RESEARCH CENTER

HAMLINE UNIVERSITY

WHAT IF WE COULD COLLABORATE AND INNOVATE TO REDUCE GUN VIOLENCE WITH EVIDENCE-BASED SOLUTIONS?

Welcome to the Minnesota Gun Violence Research Summit.

Years ago, as researchers dedicated to understanding the complexities of gun violence, we found ourselves grappling with the limitations of isolated approaches. We saw firsthand how fragmented efforts could only go so far in addressing such a profound issue. Our journey led us to realize that true progress requires a unified, multi-faceted approach—one that integrates research, policy, and community action.

Through our work and observations, we recognized a pressing need for a platform where diverse expertise could come together. This realization spurred the idea of this summit: a gathering designed to bridge gaps, foster collaboration, and drive actionable solutions.

This question is central to our mission today. We believe that by uniting our knowledge and resources, we can develop more effective strategies to prevent gun violence and make meaningful progress in building safer communities.

Throughout this summit, you will have the opportunity to engage in critical discussions, learn from leading experts, and explore innovative approaches. We encourage you to use this time to share insights, build partnerships, and contribute to a collective effort that goes beyond traditional boundaries.

Thank you for joining us in this vital endeavor. Together, we can work towards a future where our combined efforts lead to real, lasting change.

Sincerely,

Dr. Jillian Peterson

Dr. James Densley

Co-Authors, The Violence Project

Co-Directors, Violence Prevention Project Research Center

OUR TEAM

Dr. Jillian Peterson

Executive Director

Dr. Jillian Peterson is a criminology and criminal justice professor at Hamline University and director of their forensic psychology program. Jillian launched her career as a special investigator in New York City, researching the psychosocial life histories of men facing the death penalty. She earned her PhD in psychology and social behavior from the University of California, Irvine, and went on to lead large-scale research studies on mental illness and crime, mass shootings and school shootings, which have received global media attention. Jillian is a sought-after national trainer and speaker on issues related to mental illness and violence, trauma, forensic psychology, and mass violence. She is trained in restorative practices, violence mediation, crisis intervention, de-escalation, and suicide prevention.

Dr. James Densley

Deputy Director

Dr. James Densley is a professor and department chair of criminology and criminal justice at Metro State University. Born and raised in England, James' first job in the United States was as a special education teacher in the New York City public schools. After earning his DPhil in sociology from the University of Oxford, he quickly established himself as one of the world's leading experts on street gangs and serious youth violence, including violence online. James is the author or editor of 11 books and over 150 journal articles, book chapters, essays, and other works. He has been an invited or plenary speaker on four continents, and his work has attracted acclaim, awards, and global media attention.



**Check out our 2025
Legislative Report**

"If you ever wondered how we can stop mass shootings, this is the book for you."

—NICOLE HOCKLEY, co-founder and managing director, Sandy Hook Promise

THE VIOLENCE PROJECT



HOW TO STOP A MASS SHOOTING EPIDEMIC

**JILLIAN PETERSON, PHD
& JAMES DENSLEY, PHD**

The Violence Project: How to Stop a Mass Shooting Epidemic

By Jillian Peterson & James Densley



Winner of the Minnesota Book Award, an examination of the phenomenon of mass shootings in America and an urgent call to implement evidence-based strategies to stop these tragedies

"Groundbreaking." —Rachel Louise Snyder, bestselling author of *No Visible Bruises*



WHAT IF WE COULD TRANSFORM GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION IN MINNESOTA?

Gun violence is a growing crisis affecting communities across Minnesota, with recent data revealing a significant rise in both gun-related homicides and non-fatal shootings. From the bustling streets of Minneapolis and St. Paul to smaller rural towns, this crisis impacts our schools, public spaces, and mental health. Our studies show that one in five Minnesotans has been threatened with a gun, 13% have witnessed a shooting, and 4% have been shot themselves. These numbers represent real experiences of our friends, families, and neighbors.

It's clear: gun violence is NOT just an abstract issue occurring "somewhere else."

This summit is designed to be a catalyst for change, offering more than just a forum for discussion. It presents a unique opportunity to explore the complexities of gun violence, from its underlying causes to effective prevention strategies. Our goal is to move beyond conventional approaches and seek innovative, evidence-based solutions that can be applied across our state.

Today, we will engage with a variety of perspectives and expertise, sharing insights and learning from successful efforts within our own region. This summit will serve as a collaborative space where we can collectively envision and work towards a Minnesota where gun violence is significantly reduced.

This is a call to action for everyone involved. Addressing gun violence requires a united effort from all sectors of society. By coming together, we can develop a more comprehensive and impactful approach to prevention.

We hope you find the sessions and discussions both enlightening and motivating. Your participation is crucial to advancing the change we seek.

EVENT SCHEDULE

MORNING

8:00 AM

REGISTRATION AND BREAKFAST

8:30 AM

WELCOME

Jillian Peterson
Executive Director, The Violence Prevention
Project Research Center

8:40 AM

EXPERIENCE SPEAKER

Bryan Muehlberger
Daughter killed in 2019 Saugus High shooting

9:00 AM

OPENING ADDRESS

Jillian Peterson and James Densley
Co-Authors, "The Violence Project"

9:30 AM

BREAK AND REFRESHMENTS

9:45 AM

PANEL 1: SCHOOLS

David Reidman, K-12 School shooting database
Shannon Hill, St. Paul Public Schools
Rudy Perez, President of NASRO

10:45 AM

BREAK AND REFRESHMENTS

11:00 AM

PANEL 2: COMMUNITIES

Andrew Evans, Superintendent, BCA
David Pyrooz, U Colorado Boulder
Brooke Blakey, Office of Neighborhood Safety
Rob Doar, MN Gun Owners Caucus

AFTERNOON

12:00 PM

LUNCH

Networking & tabletop conversation questions

12:40 PM

EXPERIENCE SPEAKER

Nicole Hockley

Son killed in Sandy Hook Elementary shooting

1:00 PM

PANEL 3: HOMES

Alicia Nichols, Domestic violence expert

Megan Walsh, Gun Violence Prevention Law Clinic

Stefan Gingerich, MN Violent Death Dashboard

Jordan Haltaufderheid, DPS ERPO

2:00 PM

BREAK AND REFRESHMENTS

2:15 PM

EXPERIENCE SPEAKER

Tommy McBrayer

Gun Violence Survivor

Founder, Don't Shoot Guns, Shoot Hoops

2:30 PM

PANEL 4: SOLUTIONS

Rep Kelly Moller, Chair of Public Safety

Derek Lumbard, HCMC Trauma Surgeon

Justin Terrell, MN Justice Research Center

Lisa Geller, MPH, National ERPO Resource Center

3:30 PM

WRAP-UP

Networking & Refreshments

4:30 PM

CONFERENCE CLOSE

EXPERIENCE SPEAKERS



Bryan Muehlberger

Founder, The GracieStrong Foundation

Bryan Muehlberger founded The GracieStrong Foundation in honor and memory of his daughter, Gracie Anne Muehlberger, who was tragically killed at the young age of 15 in the November 14, 2019 Saugus High School mass shooting. The Foundation's mission is to empower youth to find their voice and purpose, aiming to prevent violence by building confidence and fostering positive change. Bryan's advocacy for youth empowerment reflects his commitment to preventing future tragedies. He also serves on the advisory board for the Violence Prevention Project Research Center, where he contributes his knowledge, passion, and experience to inform our research initiatives.



Tommy McBrayer

Gun Violence Survivor & Founder, "Don't Shoot Guns, Shoot Hoops"

Tommy McBrayer is the Founder and Executive Director of Don't Shoot Guns Shoot Hoops (DSGSH), an organization dedicated to using sports and community engagement as tools to prevent violence and provide positive outlets for youth. Under his leadership, DSGSH has become a vital resource in promoting non-violence and empowering young people through mentorship and athletic programs. His work has been recognized with several awards, including the 2024 Dough Pitch Winner, 2023 Malcolm X Achievement Award, 2023 Outstanding Leadership Award, and the 2023 Faith Community Service Award. Additionally, he was named a 2022-23 Flnnovation Fellow. Tommy's commitment to creating safe, supportive environments for youth has made a lasting impact on the community.



Nicole Hockley

Co-Founder and CEO of Sandy Hook Promise

Nicole Hockley is the Co-Founder and CEO of Sandy Hook Promise, an organization dedicated to preventing gun violence through educational programs and advocacy. After losing her son Dylan in the Sandy Hook Elementary School tragedy, Nicole became a leading voice in the fight against gun violence. She has spearheaded the development of initiatives like the Know The Signs programs, which focus on early intervention and community education. Under her leadership, these programs have expanded significantly, aiming to prevent violence before it occurs. Nicole's work integrates community-based strategies and public advocacy, and she serves on the advisory board for the Violence Prevention Project Research Center, contributing her expertise to advance the Center's mission.

SPEAKER NONPROFITS



The GracieStrong Foundation was established in honor of Gracie Anne Muehlberger, who's life was stolen during a senseless shooting at Saugus High School on November 14, 2019. Its mission is to empower youth to find their voice and use it to create a better world. The foundation believes this can be achieved by helping young people develop a deeper understanding of who they are and what they stand for, while also building their confidence. By guiding youth in discovering their identity and purpose, the GracieStrong Foundation aims to nurture future change makers who will leave a lasting, positive impact on the world around them.



Don't Shoot Guns, Shoot Hoops (DSGSH) is a nonprofit organization focused on ending gun violence by fostering community connections and positively impacting people of all ages through the game of basketball. DSGSH creates safe spaces for individuals to come together, share their stories, and find support. Through its programs, the organization works to address social injustices and promote healing and unity in communities, using basketball as a tool to inspire change and build stronger, safer neighborhoods.



Sandy Hook Promise is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to preventing gun violence by empowering young people and uniting communities. Founded by family members who lost loved ones in the Sandy Hook Elementary School tragedy, the organization is based in Newtown, Connecticut, and works to honor all victims of gun violence. Through education and awareness programs, Sandy Hook Promise helps youth recognize warning signs and equips them with the tools to take action. By fostering collaboration among individuals who prioritize the safety of children, the organization aims to create lasting change and prevent the senseless loss of life.



SCHOOLS PANEL

Shannon Hill

Violence Prevention Specialist, Saint Paul Public Schools

Shannon Hill serves as a Violence Prevention Specialist at Saint Paul Public Schools, Minnesota's second-largest school district, where she implements strategies to enhance school safety and reduce violence. She leads the application of the CARE team model, a collaborative approach developed in partnership with the Violence Prevention Project Research Center, to address and prevent violence in educational settings. Shannon's work involves leveraging evidence-based practices to create supportive learning environments for students. Her extensive experience includes roles in Memphis City Schools and Minneapolis Public Schools, and she holds a law enforcement certification from Hennepin Technical College. Her expertise is critical in advancing effective violence prevention strategies.

Rudy Perez

President, National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO)

Rudy Perez is the President of the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO) and serves as the Assistant Chief of Police for the Golden Valley Police Department. A graduate of the FBI National Academy, Rudy has a career spanning over two decades, including 23 years with the Los Angeles School Police Department. He has been instrumental in developing and implementing comprehensive safety protocols and training programs for school resource officers. His work focuses on enhancing school safety through effective law enforcement strategies and community collaboration. In addition to his leadership at NASRO, Rudy is actively involved with the California Coalition of Law Enforcement, representing thousands of police officers across the state, and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Academic Partnership Council, where he plays a significant role in shaping national school safety initiatives.

David Reidman

Founder and Director, K-12 School Shooting Database

David Riedman founded and directs the K-12 School Shooting Database, which provides comprehensive tracking and analysis of school shooting incidents. His database offers critical insights into patterns and trends of gun violence in educational settings, supporting the development of targeted prevention strategies. David's work emphasizes the need for accurate data to inform effective violence prevention measures and contributes to a deeper understanding of school violence. He is also an assistant professor at Idaho State University. As a data scientist, he collaborates with Dr. Jillian Peterson and Dr. James Densley on research initiatives and serves on the advisory board for the Violence Prevention Project Research Center (VPPRC), where he helps guide strategic efforts.

NOTES



COMMUNITY PANEL

Drew Evans

Superintendent, Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension

Drew Evans is the Superintendent of the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA), where he oversees statewide law enforcement and criminal investigation efforts. Since his appointment in 2015, Drew has managed the BCA's three divisions: Minnesota Justice Information Services, Investigative Services, and Forensic Science Services. His leadership includes coordinating responses to violent crime, enhancing data collection and analysis, and improving public safety through effective strategies and collaboration. Drew's extensive experience includes prior roles as BCA Assistant Superintendent, special agent, and detective, and he also serves as the Governor's Homeland Security Advisor for Minnesota. His work is integral to shaping state-wide responses to crime and advancing violence prevention initiatives.

David Pyrooz

Professor of Sociology, University of Colorado Boulder

David Pyrooz is a Professor of Sociology and Interim Director of the Prevention Science Program at the University of Colorado Boulder, specializing in community violence, gangs, and criminal justice policy. His research offers critical insights into gang dynamics and broader community violence, contributing to a deeper understanding of these issues. David's extensive academic work and publications support evidence-based approaches to violence prevention and intervention. His expertise is instrumental in shaping discussions on effective strategies to address violence through sociological research.

Brooke Blakey

Director, Office of Neighborhood Safety

Brooke A. Blakey is the Director of the Office of Neighborhood Safety for the City of St. Paul. With over 20 years of experience in criminal justice, public safety, and community engagement, Brooke has led the implementation of the City's comprehensive community-first public safety strategy. Her leadership has contributed to a significant reduction in gun-related violence in priority neighborhoods through innovative programs and strategic community partnerships. Brooke is committed to leveraging community and data-driven approaches to enhance safety and provide holistic support for victims and families affected by violence. Her extensive background includes roles with Metro Transit Police, Ramsey County Public Defender, and the Minnesota State Fair Police, reflecting her dedication to public safety and community trust.

Rob Doar

Senior Vice President of Government Affairs for the Minnesota Gun Owners Caucus

Rob Doar serves as Senior Vice President of Government Affairs for the Minnesota Gun Owners Caucus, where his work focuses on public safety and firearms policy. With over 15 years of experience as a citizen activist and lobbyist, Doar has been involved in legislative efforts concerning gun rights and public safety at the Minnesota Capitol. He has contributed to the development of policies that address the intersection of Second Amendment rights and public safety concerns, offering testimony and strategic guidance on these issues. His work frequently involves collaboration with other organizations on matters of public safety and participation in public safety policy discussions. Doar's academic background includes Mitchell-Hamline School of Law, a B.S. in Criminal Justice from Bemidji State University, A.S. in Law Enforcement, and a certificate in Public Safety Leadership from Century College.

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HOMES PANEL

Alicia Nichols

Domestic Violence Expert, Onboard Consulting, PLLC

Alicia Nichols is a leading expert in domestic violence prevention and restorative justice with over two decades of experience. Her work involves implementing strategies to address gender-based violence and promoting restorative justice practices. Alicia's national efforts in violence prevention and her expertise in domestic violence contribute to effective intervention and prevention strategies. Her focus on restorative justice and comprehensive approaches highlights the importance of addressing violence through multifaceted solutions.

Megan Walsh

Director, Gun Violence Prevention Law Clinic, University of Minnesota Law School

Megan Walsh is a Visiting Assistant Clinical Professor of Law and the Director of the Gun Violence Prevention Law Clinic at the University of Minnesota Law School. Her role underscores the intersection of law and public safety in addressing gun violence through strategic legal advocacy. She supervises Clinic students in litigation to advance gun violence prevention through the court system and in defending Minnesota gun laws against constitutional challenges. She also writes and teaches on the Second Amendment, with a focus on the intersection of domestic violence and gun violence.

Stefan Gingerich

Senior Epidemiologist, Minnesota Department of Health

Stefan Gingerich is a Senior Epidemiologist with the Injury and Violence Prevention Section at the Minnesota Department of Health. He serves as co-principal investigator on the Minnesota Violent Death Reporting System, where he analyzes the epidemiology of suicide, homicide, and firearm violence. Stefan's work is crucial for understanding and addressing violent deaths through comprehensive data analysis. Prior to his current role, he worked as a public health microbiologist at the University Hygienic Laboratory in Iowa and as a senior research analyst for StayWell, where he focused on best practices in employee health management. His extensive experience in public health research and data analysis informs violence prevention strategies and public safety policies.

Jordan Haltaufderheid

Chief of Staff, Minnesota Department of Public Safety

Jordan Haltaufderheid serves as Chief of Staff at the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, focusing on strategic statewide public safety initiatives encompassing prevention, intervention, and enforcement. His work includes overseeing DPS's legislative portfolio, the implementation of Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPOs), and other preventative measures against gun violence. Jordan's background in emergency management and public administration supports the development and execution of effective safety policies. His role highlights the importance of policy implementation in enhancing community safety through strategic measures and working with a wide range of stakeholders.

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SOLUTIONS PANEL

Kelly Moller

Minnesota State Representative

Kelly Moller is a Minnesota State Representative from Shoreview, serving the cities of Arden Hills, Mounds View, and New Brighton. First elected in 2018, she is currently the Chair of the House Public Safety Finance and Policy Committee. Under her leadership, the Minnesota Legislature has enacted significant legislation, including laws requiring criminal background checks on gun transfers, establishing an extreme risk protection order law, banning devices that convert guns into fully automatic firearms, and securing funding for both violence prevention and gun violence research. Kelly also works as a prosecutor handling felony-level appeals and has served at both the county attorney's office and the Minnesota Attorney General's Office. Additionally, she has been the executive director of a nonprofit focused on victim advocacy. Her career has been marked by a commitment to addressing the profound impact of gun violence on victims and communities.

Dr. Derek Lumbar

Director of Trauma Research, Hennepin Healthcare

Dr. Derek Lumbar is a surgeon-scientist specializing in Trauma and Surgical Critical Care at Hennepin Healthcare, where he also serves as a Research Scholar with the Hennepin Healthcare Research Institute. He holds an Assistant Professor appointment at the University of Minnesota's Department of Surgery. Dr. Lumbar completed his medical education at the Medical College of Wisconsin, followed by a general surgery residency at Hennepin County Medical Center and a Surgical Critical Care fellowship at UT Health San Antonio. His research primarily focuses on injury control and violence prevention, with a special emphasis on firearm-related injuries. Dr. Lumbar's work aims to advance trauma care, enhance injury management strategies, and deepen the understanding of the impacts of violence, supported by a recent K award from the Minnesota Center for Learning Health System Sciences.

Justin Terrell

Executive Director, Minnesota Justice Research Center

Justin Terrell is the Executive Director of the Minnesota Justice Research Center, where he is dedicated to transforming the criminal legal system through leadership development, racial equity, and systemic change. His work includes advocating for impactful policies such as the Ban the Box initiative, which improves reentry opportunities and addresses recidivism. As a longtime advocate, Justin focuses on bringing diverse groups together, identifying shared values, and building pathways for change. His commitment to violence prevention is reflected in his efforts to develop comprehensive strategies that address the root causes of violence and promote equitable justice practices.

Lisa Geller, MPH

Director, National Extreme Risk Protection Order Resource Center

Lisa Geller, MPH, is the Senior Advisor for Implementation at the Johns Hopkins Center for Gun Violence Solutions and Co-Lead of the National ERPO Resource Center. Her work focuses on advancing evidence-based gun violence prevention policies, including extreme risk protection orders and domestic violence protective orders. As Co-Lead, Lisa provides training and technical assistance to law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, clinicians, and community organizations involved in the ERPO process. She also serves as a mayoral appointee on the District of Columbia's Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board. Lisa earned her Bachelor's degree in Political Science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where she graduated Phi Beta Kappa, and her Master of Public Health (MPH) in Health Policy and Injury and Violence Prevention from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

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ADDITIONAL SPONSORS

Thank you to our generous sponsors for your vital support in making this summit possible. Your commitment to advancing violence prevention and fostering safer communities is essential to our mission. Your partnership empowers us to address the critical issues of gun violence and work towards impactful, evidence-based solutions. We are grateful for your dedication and support.



CONTRIBUTING SPONSORS



EVENT SPONSORS



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ABOUT VPPRC

The Violence Prevention Project Research Center (VPPRC) is dedicated to reducing violence through research that is both accessible and geared toward action. Our mission is to generate knowledge that informs, empowers, and drives effective policy and practice to foster safer communities. We focus on a range of critical areas, including mass shootings, school and college homicides, violence in places of worship, and homicide trends in urban settings like Minneapolis and Saint Paul. Our work also includes national surveys on gun violence exposure, aiming to address its pervasive impact across various demographics.

At VPPRC, we believe that research must be paired with practical solutions. We offer comprehensive training programs designed to equip individuals and organizations with the necessary tools to prevent violence within their communities. By integrating our research findings with actionable strategies, we strive to create meaningful and positive change. Additionally, our collaborations extend beyond isolated solutions to address systemic factors contributing to violence at individual, institutional, and societal levels.

Our student researchers are integral to our mission, working diligently to support our research efforts and keep our databases up-to-date. Their contributions ensure the relevance and accuracy of our findings. We invite you to explore our research, training opportunities, and collaborative projects to learn more about our commitment to addressing violence and promoting effective prevention strategies.

For additional information, please visit our website.



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