

# Operation Place Safety

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## First Year in Review

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This is the first report on Operation Place Safety, containing both a background on its yearlong development in 2012 and its first year of implementation throughout 2013.

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## Executive Summary

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The high-rate of prison violence committed by gang-affiliated offenders persists despite an eclectic array of strategies aimed at curbing prison violence. A community group violence reduction strategy known as Operation Ceasefire, based on well-established deterrence principles and criminological theory, has emerged as a promising practice to reduce group-motivated violence in prison. Ceasefire is a harm reduction model, acknowledging while gangs cannot be eliminated, the violence they commit can be reduced. The Ceasefire model targets specific violent acts with swift, certain, and meaningful consequences applied to the perpetrator of the violent act and the group with whom they associate. Indeed, this is group enforcement. At the same time, Ceasefire recognizes violence is not a problem to be solved by enforcement alone but rather, through a collaborative effort between law enforcement, social service providers, and community members.

The Washington State Department of Corrections has implemented Operation Place Safety which is based on the Ceasefire model. Operation Place Safety is governed by [DOC Policy 470.540 Group Violence Reduction Strategy](#) and has been in-effect as a pilot for over one year at one of DOC's highest custody general population facilities: the Washington State Penitentiary – West Complex. Piloting Operation Place Safety at the West Complex was purposeful due to its high custody, high rate of gang-affiliated offenders, and what has historically been more serious acts of violence that have occurred there. Operation Place Safety is a deterrence-based strategy aiming to make facilities safer through a three-pronged approach of:

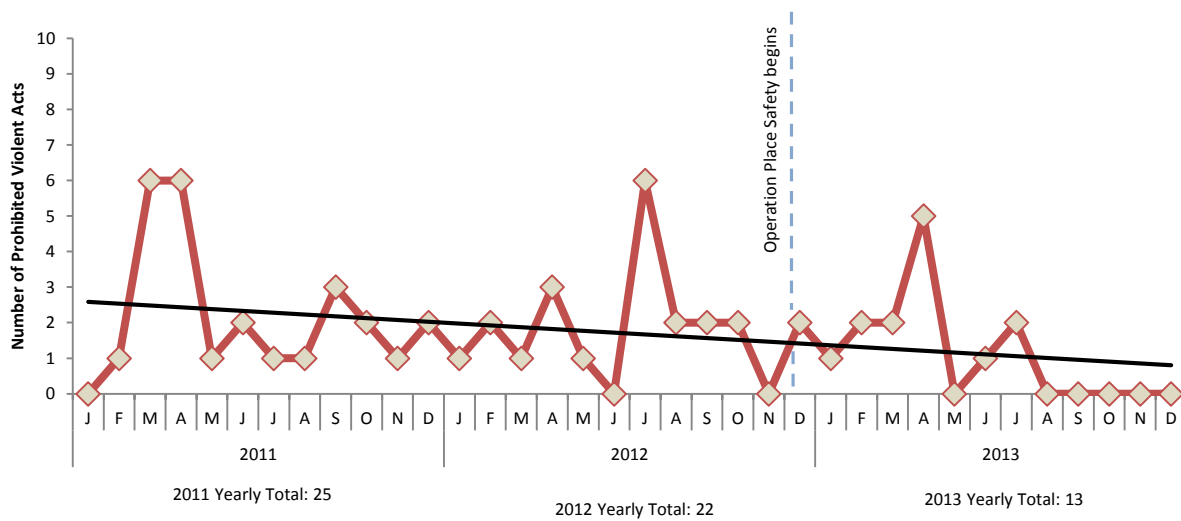
- **ENFORCEMENT.** The violent acts posing the greatest risk to staff and offender safety are exclusively targeted as prohibited violent acts. Prohibited violent acts include staff assault, a fight/assault with a weapon, and a multi-offender fight/assault. Prohibited violent acts are deterred by applying an enhanced response which includes privilege restrictions (e.g., confiscation of television, revocation of offender commissary, etc.) being imposed on groups. Groups are comprised of the offender who commit a prohibited violent act and the offenders with whom they closely associate.
- **HELP.** Assistance is made available to help offenders succeed in pro-social alternatives to violence. This includes connecting offenders to programs and jobs based on existing eligibility criteria such as risk and need. In addition, other facility resources and community partnerships are enhanced to develop other meaningful activities such as dog training, sustainable practices, and community volunteer programs.
- **ENGAGEMENT AND NOTIFICATION.** Staff and external community members, specifically those with whom offenders can identify, directly communicate with offenders in a meeting to notify them of the prohibited violent acts, outline the enhanced response, encourage participation in programs and meaningful activity, and reinforce pro-social values.

Operation Place Safety was launched at the West Complex through a notification meeting in December of 2012. Efforts and resources were frontloaded to develop Operation Place Safety because it was the first application of the Ceasefire model in a prison. This was a collaborative effort between the Washington State Department of Corrections, David Kennedy, architect of the original Ceasefire model,

and affiliates of the John Jay College of Criminal Justice Center for Crime Prevention and Control. Local organizations and community members also played a key role.

This report is a summary of the first year of Operation Place Safety. It is not a program evaluation nor is it a position paper on prison gang management strategies. Rather, this report aims to provide an overview of Operation Place Safety including its theoretical foundations, enterprise-level design, and implementation as the first application of the Ceasefire model in a correctional setting. A major objective of this report is also to explore preliminary outcomes. Operation Place Safety has only been in-effect for one year at one facility and more time is needed to assess its long-term impact on serious acts of violence. However, early data indicators are promising.

**COMPARED TO A PRE-OPERATION PLACE SAFETY TIME PERIOD OF 2011 TO A POST-OPERATION PLACE SAFETY TIME PERIOD OF 2013, PROHIBITED VIOLENT ACTS HAVE GONE DOWN IN THE WEST COMPLEX BY ALMOST 50%.**



The decline in prohibited violent acts suggests Operation Place Safety might be a promising practice to help make prisons safer. The implications of this for the Washington State Department of Corrections include expanding Operation Place Safety to other facilities. There are also wider implications. Operation Place Safety is the first application of the Ceasefire model in a correctional setting and has generated considerable interest. Correctional agencies from several states have visited the West Complex to learn more about the model which means group violence reduction strategies might be replicated in more prisons. Consequently, this will create opportunities to evaluate the evolution of the Ceasefire model from communities into prisons. However, research is ultimately what is needed to understand if Operation Place Safety is a viable strategy for reducing violence in prisons in the long-run.

## Background

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Correctional authorities have long made efforts to reduce violence in prison, particularly among high-risk populations such as gangs. At the Washington State Department of Corrections (DOC), gang-affiliated offenders make up less than one-quarter of the offender population but commit almost half of the violence in prison. With few evidence-based practices in the field of corrections to prevent gangs from committing violence, prisons have had to resort to strategies of suppression and containment. Individuals are held accountable and groups are locked up. These practices achieve the goal of isolating and containing violence but are not effective in preventing it. When one gang-affiliated offender—or an entire group—is locked up for a violent act, the gang is still represented in general population by the other gang-affiliated offenders who remain there. And even in the most restrictive custody settings such as segregation, violent acts can still be directed<sup>1</sup>. The risk of harm to staff and offenders goes unchanged and with few alternatives beyond suppression and containment, prisons are pushed into using more of it. More correctional control is imposed on groups of offenders already cohesive and resistant to outside influence. Gangs become tighter. Violence continues.

### Groups in Theory and Practice

Prisons must have rules and hold offenders accountable to them. Offenders who break prison rules by committing a violent act are removed from general population, infracted, and sanctioned; perhaps to segregation or a revocation of good conduct time extending their prison stay. Indirect consequences of their violent actions will also take shape: demotions to more restrictive custody settings where opportunities for programming, jobs, and family visits will be reduced. It is reasonable to assume the offender has been taught a lesson; the consequences unfolding are in direct result of their actions and some deterrence has been gained. This is an overly generous assumption because the offenders who commit violent acts are being held accountable not only by formal authorities but also by informal authorities such as gangs. To be clear, gang affiliation does not automate violence. If half of all prison violence is committed by gang-affiliated offenders, this also means an equal portion of prison violence is not. Most offenders, including those who are gang-affiliated, comply with most prison rules most of the time. However, there is a social organization in prison and a code of conduct that competes with prison rules. This is the ‘inmate code’<sup>2</sup> and offenders collectively hold each other accountable to it. ‘Snitching’ or retreating from a fight are ways to violate this code and some groups even forbid their members from participating in re-entry programming as a way to rebuff the correctional authorities who provide them. Codes are rich and nuanced but, offenders know what they are and the consequences for violating them. Simply falling out of favor with a group and losing the fringe benefits of association such as protection, money, or a sense of belonging are powerful consequences. Violence may also be used. It is difficult to unpack any violent act (especially assaults with weapons or group disturbances) to *not* find: snitching, disputes over commodities such as phones or yard time, or retaliation for drug or gambling debts gone unpaid. Such conflict is not limited to gangs. It must be said: gangs are groups but, not all groups are gangs. Most offenders reinforce the code through group cohesion. Gangs are the most overt example. Gangs sometimes have clear roles, hierarchy, and rivalries with other groups that have gone

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<sup>1</sup> For a review of the resiliency of gangs in high security settings: Wallace-Wells, B. (2014, February 26). Is solitary confinement an impossible idea?. *New York Magazine*. Retrieved from <http://nymag.com/news/features/solitary-secure-housing-units-2014-2/>.

<sup>2</sup> Gresham Sykes coined this term during his pioneering study on the social organization of prisons in the 1950's. See Sykes, G.M. (1958). *The society of captives: A study of maximum security prisons*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

on for so long that no one remembers why they started. However, gang members do know that failing to follow a directive from a leader or refraining from expressing their group allegiance, through violence with an enemy combatant if necessary, are code violations that bring the risk of a violent consequence. These are group dynamics in which offenders are locked. Individuals must be held accountable but, gangs must also be managed.

### Prior Gang Management Strategies

The key to reducing violence is to give gang-affiliated offenders the ability to opt out of the group dynamic that drives them to commit violent acts. This was the basic philosophy underlying DOC's previous violence reduction strategies.

- **SEPARATING CERTAIN RIVAL GANGS AT RECEPTION TO DETERMINE AN OPTIMAL FACILITY PLACEMENT.** All offenders are screened for circumstances that might preclude them from certain housing assignments for safety concerns. For example, if an offender is deemed to pose a risk to the safety of another offender, separate general population facilities are assigned. Gang-affiliated offenders are screened via this process as well and group rivalries are a particular consideration. Not all gangs have a rival group and even those who do don't necessarily carry out their rivalry with violence. However, the rivalries of some gangs were more pervasive and more strongly influenced their members to commit violence. DOC conducted additional screenings with these groups. Certain rival gangs were separated at prison admission and then after classification into the least restrictive custody based on criminal history and behavior (gang affiliation is not a factor in classification), individual gang-affiliated offenders were interviewed as part of a 'high touch' process to determine a facility assignment to prevent them from getting mixed up in the group dynamic driving violence<sup>3</sup>.
- **HARNESSING PRO-SOCIAL INFLUENCES SUCH AS FAMILY TO ENCOURAGE DESISTANCE FROM GANG ACTIVITY.** Most offenders value the ability to maintain relationships with their families and children. Gang-affiliated offenders are no different. For some gang-affiliated offenders, this influenced preferences for a facility close to their home communities where prison visitation would be more feasible. There were genuine motivations for gang-affiliated offenders to do their own time and a desire to see them succeed in doing it. DOC made efforts to locate gang-affiliated offenders at facilities close to their home communities so they could maintain relationships with their families which might also help them desist from gang activity.
- **STRATEGIC HOUSING: INTEGRATING AND SEPARATING RIVAL GANGS.** Some gang-affiliated offenders were granted overrides to custodies below their classification to help them avoid the deeper gang politics at higher custody facilities. Other gang-affiliated offenders were assigned to facilities corresponding to their custody classification where they could also be separated from rival gangs, if necessary.

All DOC facilities are comprised of non-affiliated and gang-affiliated offenders of various groups, even rival gangs, safely co-mingling in general population. The Washington State Penitentiary (WSP) West Complex is the only facility that separates certain rival gangs from one another using its four living units

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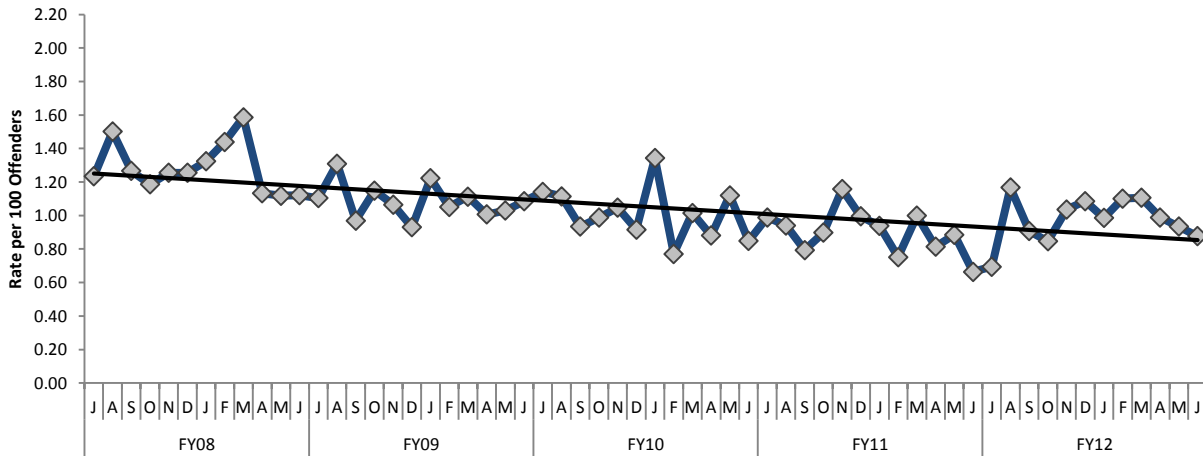
<sup>3</sup> For more information on prior violence reduction strategies: Green, S.J. (2010, August 18). State's proactive approach drives down prison violence. *Seattle Times*. Retrieved from [http://seattletimes.com/html/localnews/2012662972\\_prisonviolence19m.html](http://seattletimes.com/html/localnews/2012662972_prisonviolence19m.html).

divided by a perimeter fence into two separate quadrants. There is no between-quadrant contact which keeps rival gangs from committing violent acts against one another.

**Aggregate Impact and the West Complex**

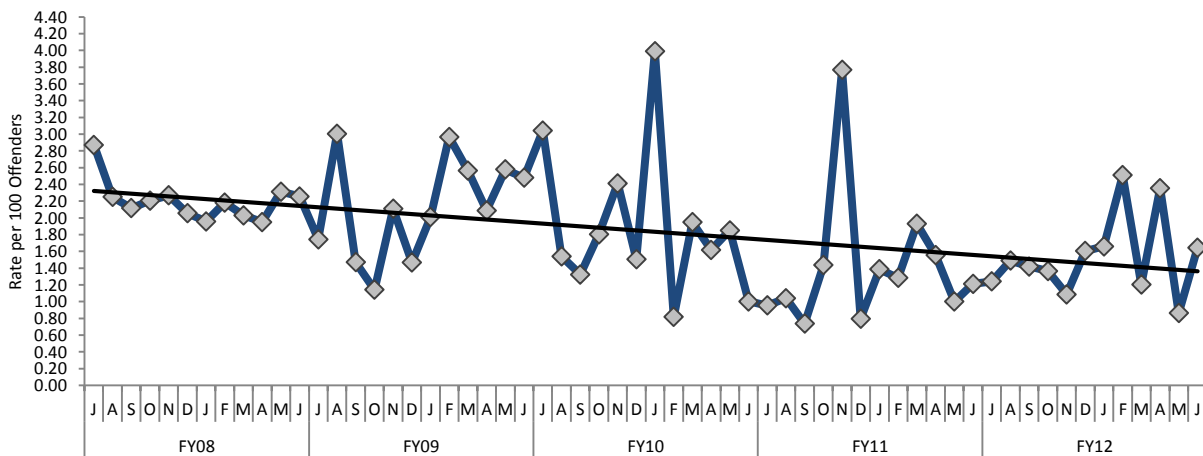
Facilities around the state experienced reductions in violence almost immediately after these strategies began and this reduction continued for several years. See Graph 1 (below).

GRAPH 1: RATE OF VIOLENT INFRACTIONS<sup>4</sup> FISCAL YEAR 2008 TO 2012 – ALL PRISONS



Violence was going down at WSP as well. See Graph 2 (below). However, the most severe forms of violence came out of the four units comprising the West Complex.

GRAPH 2: RATE OF VIOLENT INFRACTIONS FISCAL YEAR 2008 TO 2012 – WASHINGTON STATE PENITENTIARY



<sup>4</sup> The [Washington Administrative Code](#) outlines all infractions applied for rule violations in prison. DOC uses certain infractions to track prison violence, specifically: 502 – aggravated assault on another offender, 505 – fighting, 602 – possession of a weapon, 604 – aggravated assault on a staff member, 611 – sexual assault on a staff member, 633 – assault on another offender, 635 – sexual assault on another offender, and 704 – assault on a staff member.

Offender fights were larger, sometimes becoming group disturbances, and assaults against staff were more severe and more frequent. For example, in fiscal year 2012 there were 11 aggravated staff assaults and WSP accounted for all but one of them. See Table 1 (below). Some facilities such as the Monroe Correctional Complex experienced more staff assaults than WSP but, the staff assaults experienced by other facilities tended to be less severe as indicated by their non-aggravated status<sup>5</sup>.

TABLE 1: NUMBER OF VIOLENT INFRACTIONS AND STAFF ASSAULT INFRACTIONS WITH TYPE FISCAL YEAR 2012 – MAJOR FACILITIES

Facility	All Violent Infractions	All Staff Assaults	Aggravated Staff Assaults	Non-Aggravated Staff Assaults
Airway Heights Corrections Center	240	5	0	5
Clallam Bay Corrections Center	129	5	0	5
Coyote Ridge Corrections Center	331	6	0	6
Monroe Correctional Complex	244	59	0	59
Stafford Creek Corrections Center	157	12	0	12
Washington Corrections Center	241	22	1	21
Washington Corrections Center for Women	99	5	0	5
Washington State Penitentiary	388	47	10	37
<b>DOC</b>	<b>1829</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>150</b>

The West Complex was the only facility in which rival gangs could be housed separately. Half of the offender population at the West Complex was gang-affiliated; a rate twice that of nearly all other facilities. It was also one of only two facilities operating at close custody, the highest general population custody level where offenders serving sentences for the most violent of crimes must initially be housed. The West Complex had become the de facto location for high violent gang-affiliated offenders and their numbers had to be intensively managed. Transfers between facilities were conducted and opportunities for custody promotions were monitored to help redistribute concentrations of gang-affiliated offenders out of the West Complex. Violence still happened, 66% of which involved a gang-affiliated offender, and lockdowns often followed. The combination of high custody and high numbers of gang-affiliated offenders meant the group dynamic had been made deep in the West Complex. And with few other general population options, gang-affiliated offenders vacillated between close custody and segregation. The group dynamic was hard to avoid and eventually, it started to influence offenders beyond the West Complex. Violence at other facilities began going up, some of it directed by gang leadership at WSP.

<sup>5</sup>Staff assaults are distinguished through two separate infractions: 604 – aggravated assault on a staff member and 704 – assault on a staff member. Both include a staff member being physically attacked. Aggravated staff assaults are unique in that they must result in a physical injury that required medical care beyond assessment (e.g., bandaging, suturing, surgery). A non-aggravated staff assault might result in a physical injury but does not require medical care. For example, an aggravated staff assault might include an offender throwing closed fist punches at a staff member whereas a non-aggravated staff assault might include an offender throwing food products or bodily secretions at a staff member.



Worse, offenders in the West Complex began to commit more serious violent acts indicating once successful gang management strategies were waning in efficacy.

### Serious Violent Acts

In early-2012, two violent incidents involving weapons occurred within days of one another in adjacent living units of the West Complex. Violent incidents with weapons had been rare.

- **JANUARY 31.** An offender assaulted another offender with multiple strikes to the head and upper body using a handmade weapon. The offender-victim sustained life-threatening injuries. No injuries were incurred by staff.
- **FEBRUARY 4.** Two offenders, equipped with handmade weapons, engaged in mutual combat. The incident became larger and more dangerous as several other offenders became involved and the offenders turned their weapons on responding staff. Injuries were sustained by multiple staff and offenders.

Both incidents were gang-related, products of group conflict expressed violently, and the short time period in which they occurred was troubling. Weapons mean fear and fear means more weapons. Offenders who equip themselves with weapons often fear for their own safety which may be influenced by thinking other offenders have weapons<sup>6</sup>. Post-incident searches of the West Complex resulted in additional weapons being confiscated. This was concerning for the safety of staff, especially for responding staff who were at risk of being seriously harmed. This created urgency to adopt a strategy that was preventative first and reactive second. The goal was to reduce the risk of harm to staff and offenders by deterring the most serious violent acts. However, with few strategies in corrections beyond the limited practices of suppression and containment, DOC began looking outward and found a strategy that had emerged decades earlier in response to serious acts of group-motivated violence taking place in Boston, Massachusetts.

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<sup>6</sup> The theme of fear is robust in research on violence among populations such as offenders but also more general groups of people. For example, Sheley and Wright found that approximately forty-percent of high-school students had been shot at or threatened with a gun and nearly half knew a schoolmate who had been shot at. Self-defense was mentioned as the most common reason for carrying a firearm. See Sheley J.F. and Wright, J.D. (October 1998). High school youths, weapons, and violence: A national survey (Research Brief). *National Institute of Justice: Research in Brief*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles/172857.pdf>.

## Operation Ceasefire

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The early-nineties had seen Boston become entrenched with unprecedented levels of street gun violence. The annual homicide rate was rising and the majority of people dying were young people. Between 1987 and 1990, homicide among persons under the age of 24 increased 230%<sup>7</sup>. Boston had a problem with youth homicide. Law enforcement had become overwhelmed by the problem and despite their best efforts, young people in Boston continued to die violent deaths. A new approach was needed. With sponsorship from the National Institute of Justice, criminal justice experts from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, including now well-known Ceasefire creator David Kennedy, and law enforcement in Boston formed a workgroup to study youth homicide and design an intervention. Through a mixed-methods approach, using crime data and the experiences of frontline law enforcement practitioners, the workgroup uncovered interesting patterns about Boston's youth homicide problem:

- **GANGS, CLIQUES, AND CREWS.** Perpetrators and victims knew each other and both were involved with gangs, cliques, and crews. Young people in Boston were killing other young people, resolving 'personal beefs' and gang conflict by shooting each other.
- **HIGHLY CRIMINAL POPULATION.** Both perpetrators and victims had extensive contact with the legal system. Many perpetrators and victims were on probation or parole and a small number of them made up the majority of all arrests and arraignments. Boston's youth were committing homicides, other crimes, and their criminality was concentrated among a few high-rate offenders.

Boston's youth homicide problem was concentrated within a known gang population and their offending patterns made them vulnerable, giving law enforcement the ability to use these vulnerabilities as 'levers' to be pulled<sup>8</sup>. Law enforcement could serve outstanding warrants, launch investigations, and make arrests for low-level crimes. They could also pull levers quickly, easily, and exact them as consequences on an entire group. Indeed, the plan was for law enforcement to hold *groups* accountable for shootings committed by individual members. Law enforcement combined the legal vulnerabilities of each youth, assembled them as criminal cases to use as collateral, and held in-person 'call-in' meetings with gangs to make a promise: future youth homicides would result in law enforcement coming to collect on that promise. At the same time, help was offered. Social service providers in Boston gave opportunities beyond the streets such as job referrals, housing assistance, gang mediation, etc. Youth had options but, the expectations were clear and law enforcement responded to future shootings by pulling levers. Boston's youth were apprehended in arrest sweeps; their other criminal activities such as illegal drug markets disrupted, and enhanced surveillance was given to the group who's shooting prompted extra attention by law enforcement. In the years after Ceasefire implementation, youth homicide in Boston dropped 63%.

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<sup>7</sup> Kennedy, D.M., Braga, A.A., and Piehl, A.M. (2001). Developing and implementing Operation Ceasefire. *Reducing Gun Violence: The Boston Gun Project's Operation Ceasefire*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/188741.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> For more on the theoretical foundations of pulling levers strategies: Kennedy, D.M. (1997). Pulling levers: Chronic offenders, high-crime settings, and a theory of prevention. *Valparaiso Law Review*, 31. Retrieved from [http://www.hks.harvard.edu/var/ezp\\_site/storage/fckeditor/file/pdfs/centers-programs/programs/criminal-justice/pulling\\_levers.pdf](http://www.hks.harvard.edu/var/ezp_site/storage/fckeditor/file/pdfs/centers-programs/programs/criminal-justice/pulling_levers.pdf).

### A Promising Practice

The reduction in youth homicide in Boston prompted law enforcement agencies around the country to launch versions of Ceasefire to address their violent crime problems. Gun homicide in Stockton, California dropped 42%, gang-member involved homicide in Lowell, Massachusetts was reduced by 44%, and even Los Angeles, California, the gang capitol of the world, experienced significant short-term reductions in violent and gang crime after implementing Ceasefire<sup>9</sup>. Despite its success in communities, prison has been uncharted territory. It is not clear why. However, the escalation of serious acts of group-motivated violence in the West Complex alongside few correctional strategies effective in reducing violence, presented the need to try something new. Could Ceasefire make prisons safer? It quickly became apparent answering the question of ‘will Ceasefire work?’ required expert-level understanding as to *why* it worked.

### Studying Ceasefire

DOC began conducting preliminary research of the Ceasefire model. As a deterrence strategy, Ceasefire is based on well-established deterrence principles to maximize the use of sanction as a crime prevention tool. For example, research informs a swift and certain sanction is more deterrent than a delayed and severe sanction. There is also evidence suggesting communities and peer groups to be more influential in gaining compliance to the law than the sanctions imposed by law enforcement. Traditional enforcement is constrained in both aspects and Ceasefire leverages these deterrent constraints by restructuring existing resources around needed deterrence principles and other impactful controls to more effectively prevent crime.

- **FOCUS EXCLUSIVELY ON THE MOST SERIOUS CRIME PROBLEMS.** There are more rules than there are resources to enforce them. Zero-tolerance and ‘obey all laws’ policies lead to the inconsistent application of rules and consequences, causing offenders to become ignorant of what they actually are, and for their offending to go undeterred. Focusing enforcement resources on the most serious crime problems increases the likelihood of getting caught and enhances deterrence.
- **USE OTHER AVAILABLE LEGAL AND INFORMAL SANCTIONS CREATIVELY.** Traditional legal processes (investigation, apprehension, prosecution) delay a sanction from being in close proximity to the crime and do not result in all offenders who commit crimes being sanctioned (such as those committed by a group). This may also result in the application of overly harsh sanctions holding more downsides than deterrent value. Flexible legal controls exist outside traditional processes which can accelerate the swiftness of a sanction and widen the scope of accountability to be more deterrent.
- **TARGET GROUPS TO REDUCE GROUP VIOLENCE.** A disproportionate amount of violence is committed by individuals locked in group dynamics such as gangs and street groups. Group dynamics are more influential in gaining compliance to the law than the sanctions imposed by law enforcement. The group dynamic driving offenders to commit violence can be flipped to deter it provided groups, not individuals, begin to be held accountable.
- **ADVERTISE AND CONNECT OFFENDERS TO SOCIAL SERVICES AND PROGRAMS.** Many offenders, even those locked in group dynamics and the violence that comes with it, don’t like the

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<sup>9</sup> National Network for Safe Communities. (n.d.) Fact Sheet. *Center for Crime Prevention and Control*, [http://www.nnscommunities.org/NNSC1000a\\_Factsheet\\_Final\\_revised\\_single.pdf](http://www.nnscommunities.org/NNSC1000a_Factsheet_Final_revised_single.pdf).

situation they are in and enforcement alone will do little to make it better. If given the opportunity to succeed in pro-social alternatives to groups and violence, many offenders will take it.

- **COMMUNICATE PRO-SOCIAL COMMUNITY STANDARDS AND DISCREDIT VIOLENCE-CULTIVATING NORMS.** Offenders, even those who commit violent acts, know violence is wrong. So do the communities to which they belong. Violence is a product of powerful peer norms concealing existing moral values. Engaging offenders' communities in enforcement strategies as a source to counter violence-cultivating norms can prevent the perpetuation of violence. Changing norms can change behavior.

There were similar themes between the stories of Boston and the West Complex. However, these were also very different environments. Ceasefire offered a model but, what would this look like in prison? A community model needed translating.

## Designing a New Strategy

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In April 2012, DOC began collaborating with Ceasefire architect and crime prevention expert David Kennedy and affiliates of the John Jay College of Criminal Justice Center for Crime Prevention and Control, to modify Ceasefire for implementation in prison. From these conversations, similarities between the deterrent constraints of the traditional enforcement methods used in the community and those used in prison emerged to reveal a framework for a new violence reduction strategy.

- **FOCUS ON THE VIOLENT ACTS POSING THE GREATEST RISK TO STAFF AND OFFENDER SAFETY.** Not all violent acts are created equal. Certain violent acts hold elements that increase the risk of harm to staff and offenders. For example, an assault with a weapon is not the same as an assault without one. DOC could not afford to continue treating all violent acts the same.
- **USE OTHER FORMS OF CORRECTIONAL CONTROL AS LEVERS TO PULL.** Traditional prison discipline was limited. Processes involving investigations and hearings moved too slowly to be optimally deterrent. Using segregation was also troubling. There was a clear need to remove the offenders from general population who had committed serious violent acts such as assaults with weapons or group disturbances. However, there was also a need to acknowledge this might make group dynamics worse. Group-motivated violence may be legitimized by segregation as a 'cause' worthy of 'going down for'.
- **HOLD GROUPS ACCOUNTABLE FOR THE ACTIONS OF INDIVIDUAL OFFENDERS.** Individual accountability was not effective in deterring violence that was essentially group-motivated. The fact that 2/3 of all violent acts taking place in the West Complex could be tied back to a gang-affiliated offender was not coincidence. These were group dynamics at play, made deep by place-specific context: high custody and high concentrations of gang-affiliated offenders. The group dynamic needed to be targeted rather than fragmented.
- **ENHANCE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROGRAMMING AND OTHER ACTIVITY BUT FIRST REDUCE VIOLENCE.** Offenders needed to have more opportunities to reduce their idleness. There were programs and activities in the West Complex but, violence needed to be reduced to make them more available. Recurring violent acts prompted recurring lockdowns and the length of each varied in relation to their severity of the violent act. Lockdowns prevented staff from being able to run programs, not to mention develop new ones. And lockdowns were often followed by modified operating protocols where offender movements out of the living unit had to be made more restrictive. This made it hard to maximize the availability of programs and activities. The violent acts committed by a few offenders were depriving the majority of offenders of opportunities to serve their sentence in a productive way.
- **PARTNER WITH COMMUNITIES TO COMMUNICATE TO OFFENDERS THE PRO-SOCIAL STANDARDS NEEDED FOR A SAFE, PRODUCTIVE PRISON COMMUNITY.** Staff safety is not possible without offender safety, public safety is not possible without prison safety, and without prison safety little else is possible. Offenders needed to *hear* how violence impacted their safety, the

safety of staff and other offenders, and how it impacted their ability to do their time in a positive way. Neither staff nor offenders wanted to be on lockdown but, the West Complex needed to be made safer before it could be made less restrictive. Offenders also needed to hear how violence impacted the community, *their* communities. The West Complex needed to be safe for offenders and for their families in the community.

These deterrent constraints revealed themselves as leverage points for DOC to design a strategy to prevent serious violent acts. Which violent acts posed the greatest risk to staff and offender safety? What is a group and how do you hold them accountable? These questions required answers aligning with deterrence principles and correctional practice.

### Focusing on Prohibited Violent Acts

DOC identified the violent acts posing the greatest risk to staff and offender safety as: staff assault, fight/assault with a weapon, and a multi-offender fight/assault. These prohibited violent acts are informally known as the ‘forbidden 3’ and several considerations were given to enforce them.

- **FIRM DEFINITIONS.** Violent acts were not always cut-and-dry. What ‘counted’? Prohibited violent acts were defined according to the problem taking place in the West Complex: serious harm. Staff assault was defined as those causing or attempted to cause bodily injury, fights/assaults with a weapon were defined as those in which a weapon is used or visibly present during the incident, and multi-offender fights/assaults were defined as those involving three or more offenders.
- **FAIR AND REASONABLE.** Target the most serious acts of violence likely to be group-motivated. Shifting from individual to group accountability was a dramatic shift and it mattered that the violent acts targeted seemed reasonable in the eyes of offenders.
- **AVAILABLE RESOURCES FOR A CONSISTENT FOLLOW THROUGH.** DOC planned to focus all available resources on the violent acts that posed an increased risk to staff and offender safety. However, there was a need to be mindful of how often these violent acts occurred because they needed to be met by a swift and certain response<sup>10</sup>. This meant ensuring there were sufficient resources to follow-through each time a prohibited violent act occurred. For example, one-on-one fights occurred frequently enough that targeting them might exhaust enforcement resources, induce anxiety among the offender population, and do little to reduce lockdowns in the West Complex. Fortunately, more severe violent acts were also the least frequent.

Prohibited violent acts became the focus of new violence reduction strategy. Offenders were still infracted and sanctioned for committing a prohibited violent act just as they were for other rule violations such as one-on-one fights, tattooing, or failing a drug test. Traditional prison discipline remained in place but, prohibited violent acts would also be met with an enhanced response designed exclusively for their commission.

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<sup>10</sup> Research suggests that swift and certain sanctions are the most effective way to generate deterrence. See Hawken A. and Kleiman, M. (2009). Managing drug involved probationers with swift and certain sanctions: Evaluating Hawaii’s HOPE. *National Institute of Justice*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/229023.pdf>.

### Enhanced Response: Group Accountability and Privilege Restrictions

An enhanced response was developed to include group accountability and levers being pulled. Parameters for groups and levers needed to be defined. Groups were defined to include those offenders committing a prohibited violent act (perpetrators) and the offenders whose regular interaction with the perpetrator has the potential to influence their behavior (close associates). Existing offender privileges (levers) were identified as meaningful behavioral tools, of which, the expertise of frontline staff was harnessed to develop and whose knowledge would continue to be relied upon to implement the enhanced response.

- **QUICK LOCKDOWNS TO SUPPORT A SWIFT, CERTAIN, AND MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESPONSE.** Serious violent acts typically required a lockdown. Implementing 36-hour lockdowns provided an opportunity to support multidisciplinary teams of staff working through a process to identify the perpetrators and determine their close associates
- **TAPPING THE EXPERTISE OF UNIT STAFF TO DETERMINE WHO PERPETRATORS ASSOCIATE WITH.** By virtue of confinement, offender associations are contained and controlled. Unit staff see who offenders eat with, recreate with, and have knowledge of group alliances forming and breaking in real-time. A team of unit staff from multiple shifts is asked to contribute their observations on the interactions between perpetrators and other offenders so that a robust list of associates was generated.
- **A LOCAL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE SUSTAINS A SYSTEM OF CHECKS AND BALANCES.** A local oversight committee was established to review the offenders identified by unit staff. Any outliers are removed and those offenders repeatedly identified become validated as close associates. It was decided that about seven to nine close associates could be selected for each perpetrator to ensure a small, cohesive group of offenders congealed through a process that was firm, fair, and consistent.
- **IMPOSING PRIVILEGE RESTRICTIONS ON GROUPS.** Offenders have privileges such as access to television, commissary, and weightlifting that make doing time more comfortable. DOC had rarely interfered with offenders' ability to enjoy these privileges. Privileges could be restricted at a moment's notice (and often were if a serious violent act prompted a lockdown). Privileges were also flexible enough so they could be applied to groups. It was decided that groups could collectively serve 4-6 privilege restrictions for 30 days.

Group accountability did not replace individual accountability. The enhanced response became symbiotic with traditional prison discipline. The offender committing a prohibited violent act was still removed from general population, infraacted, and sanctioned accordingly. Privilege restrictions were also applied to them and to their close associates who remained in general population.

### Building in Pro-social Opportunities

Designing this new strategy was not just about enforcement. There had to be opportunities for offenders to reduce their idleness and engage in meaningful activity. DOC enhanced existing programming resources to help offenders succeed in pro-social alternatives to violence.

- **REVIVING CURRICULUM AND PARTNERING WITH THE COMMUNITY TO DO MORE.** Staff volunteered to facilitate programs that had gone stagnant and used existing curriculum to enhance

opportunities. Parenting, personal finance classes, and other programs were revived and community nonprofits were partnered with to bring in new programming options. This was not about getting offenders out of gangs but rather, giving offenders an opportunity to serve their sentence in a productive way.

- **ASSEMBLING A MENU OF OPPORTUNITIES TO CONTRIBUTE.** Existing sustainability programs<sup>11</sup> were leveraged to increase opportunities and allow more offenders to participate in composting, gardening, and vermaculture. Opportunities to give back to the community were also built in: bicycle and wheelchair refurbishing, woodwork and artistic donations to nonprofits, and obedience training for dogs.

Programs were not used as privilege restrictions. This was deliberate because DOC wanted to ensure behavioral contingencies remained clear. Participating in pro-social activities was optional but, the enhanced response was certain. Furthermore, programs and other activities could not be made fully available if the West Complex wasn't safe or in lockdown.

### Holding a Prison Call-in

Offenders needed to have the opportunity to comply with this new strategy and understand the reasons for putting into effect an enhanced response dramatically different from traditional prison discipline. DOC planned a call-in<sup>12</sup> meeting to launch the strategy.

- **COMMUNITY MORAL VOICES.** Contacts were made, networks tapped, and relationships were formed to bring the outside in. External community members with whom offenders could identify such as clergy, crime victims, and former offenders were partnered with to speak to offenders on the impact of violence and demonstrate the possibility to do better. There is power in having a family member of a violent crime victim speak about losing their loved one or hearing an ex-offender speak about turning their lives around by getting a job or reunifying with family. These stories impact people. Offenders are no different. This was about partnering with influential sources to delegitimize the violence-cultivating norms influencing offenders' violent actions<sup>13</sup>.
- **OFFENDER ATTENDEES.** A diverse offender-audience, one that could easily diffuse a message throughout the offender population, was invited to attend. A location within the facility was selected as a collective setting in which communication with offenders could take place. This was not about targeting (or inadvertently reinforcing) group power structures but rather, about using offenders as conduits to get a message out.
- **DELIVERING CORE MESSAGES.** The prohibited violent acts and enhanced response were outlined to offenders and supported reasons why: the actions of a few offenders were making the facility unsafe, and this had resulted in the majority of offenders being deprived of opportunities to do their time in a productive way. The enhanced response

<sup>11</sup> For more information on WSP's sustainability efforts: Porter, A. (2013, May 6). Sustainable practices lab puts inmates back to work. *Walla Walla Union-Bulletin*. Retrieved from <http://union-bulletin.com/news/2013/may/04/sustainable-practices-lab-puts-inmates-back-to/>.

<sup>12</sup> Call-ins are an essential part of the community Ceasefire model. For more information: von Ulmenstein, S. (2010, July). Notes from the field: Call-in at Lebanon Correctional Institution, Lebanon, Ohio. *National Network for Safe Communities*. Retrieved from [http://www.nnscommunities.org/Lebanon\\_Correctional\\_Facility\\_Call-In\\_FINAL\\_0603.pdf](http://www.nnscommunities.org/Lebanon_Correctional_Facility_Call-In_FINAL_0603.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> For more information on norms and their role in the Ceasefire model: Kennedy, D.M. (2010, January). Practice Brief: Norms, narratives, and community engagement for crime prevent. *Center for Crime Prevention and Control*, [http://www.jjay.cuny.edu/npsc/pdfs/Haas\\_%20practice\\_brief\\_finalwinter2010.pdf](http://www.jjay.cuny.edu/npsc/pdfs/Haas_%20practice_brief_finalwinter2010.pdf).



was not ideal but, it offered a better way to get the violence down so lockdowns could be fewer and positive opportunities could be more available.

The elements needed for a new violence reduction strategy, nearly one year in the making, were ready. To finalize all development work, [DOC Policy 470.540 Group Violence Reduction Strategy](#) (see appendix) was put in place and facility wide trainings for staff on the enhanced response were conducted. In addition, a small group of staff convened in seminar-style workshops to develop the subject-matter expertise needed to guide the policy according to the core deterrence principles upon which it was based. DOC was ready to reduce the serious acts of group-motivated violence through a strategy named for its goal: Operation Place Safety.

## Implementing Operation Place Safety

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On December 9, 2012, a pilot of Operation Place Safety began at the West Complex. Two Call-in sessions were held in the West Complex Visit Room with about 40 offenders attending each. A panel of WSP staff and community partners explained the enhanced response and interacted with offenders after a formal presentation to answer questions. A post call-in letter (see appendix) was also distributed to offenders in the West Complex to inform them of strategy launch. Notification documents were also added to the orientation sessions conducted for newly admitted offenders at DOC's Reception Center and for in-transit offenders coming to the West Complex from other facilities. System-wide notifications of Operation Place Safety ensured offenders would know what to expect should they be housed at the West Complex.

### The First Prohibited Violent Act

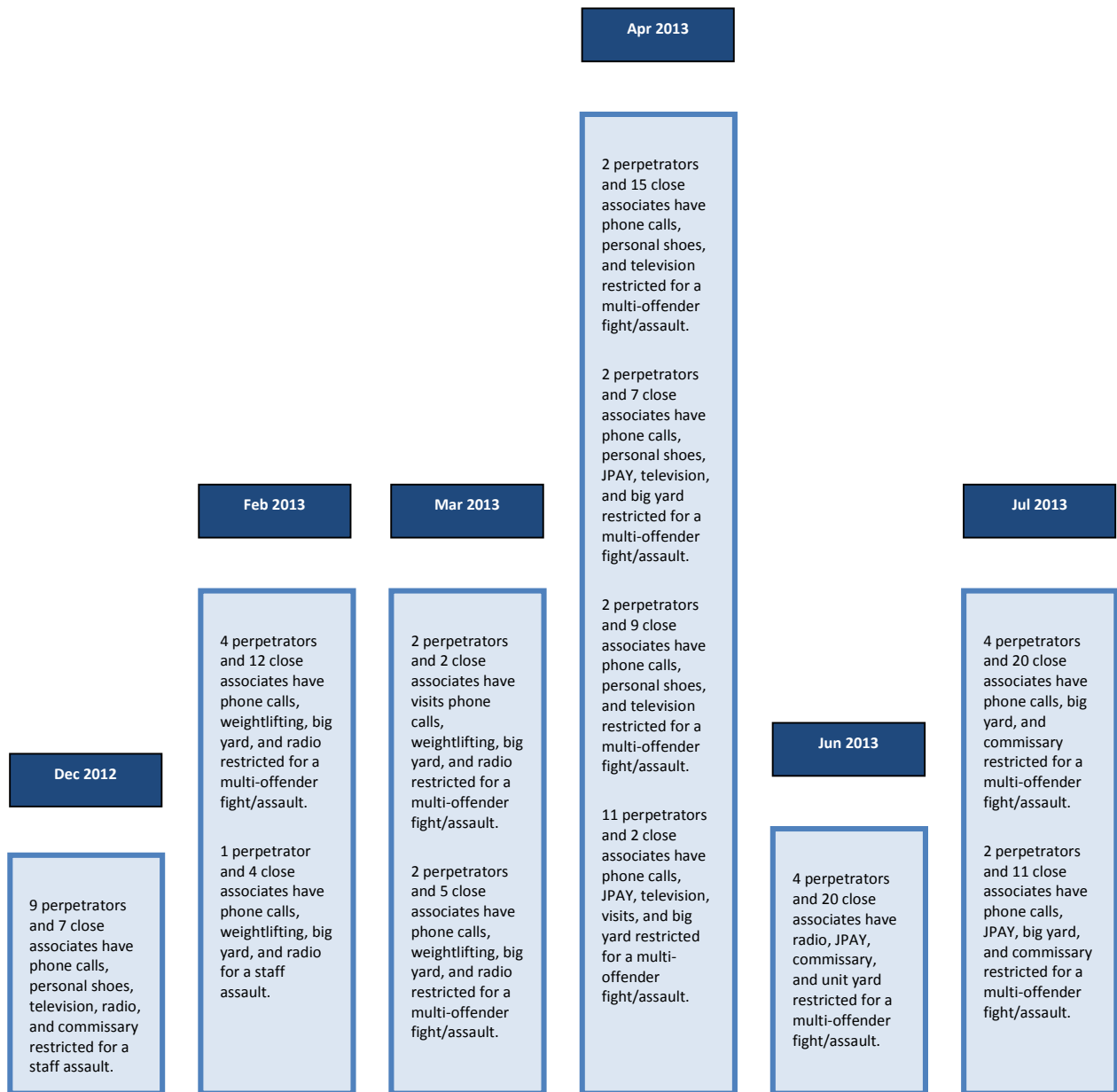
On December 11, 2012, nine gang-affiliated offenders committed an unprovoked attack on staff in the West Complex. There is no direct evidence linking Operation Place Safety to the attack but, it is likely the incident was a demonstration of resistance in response to the call-in held days earlier. The staff attacked in the incident sustained serious injuries. This staff assault was more severe than others occurring previously and the group responsible demonstrated an unprecedented level of solidarity after it took place. This was strong, collective action by a highly cohesive group. Multiple offenders refused to talk to staff, had to be forcibly removed from their cells, and required placement in segregation to ensure the safety and security of the facility. Few offenders affiliating with that group remained in general population following the incident. The West Complex entered a 36-hour lockdown period, a time during which staff deployed the enhanced response, and produced a list of perpetrators and close associates who would serve privilege restrictions. Operation Place Safety was deployed for subsequent prohibited violent acts but few have reached the same threshold of severity as this initial incident.

### Deployments of Enhanced Response

Over calendar year 2013, Operation Place Safety became a standard practice at the West Complex. The enhanced response was implemented for different incidents of a prohibited violent act and resulted in groups of offenders serving privilege restrictions. Each application has become part of a swift and certain response to the violent acts posing the greatest risk to staff and offender safety. This is deterrence at work.

- **OPERATION PLACE SAFETY WAS IMPLEMENTED 12 TIMES.** Some applications have occurred in close proximity to one another requiring recurring deployments of the enhanced response within a short time frame.
- **GROUPS COMPRISE AN AVERAGE OF 13 OFFENDERS PER INCIDENT.** This includes both the perpetrator and close associates who collectively serve the same privilege restrictions for 30 days. See Infographic 1 (next page).

INFOGRAPHIC 1 – DEPLOYMENTS OF ENHANCED RESPONSE CALENDAR YEAR 2013 – WEST COMPLEX



Deployments of the enhanced response are targeted towards prohibited violent acts but even as key strategy outputs, they are not the same as outcomes. More time is needed to fully evaluate the impact of Operation Place Safety on prohibited violent acts because it has only been in place at one facility for one year. However, initial data indicators are promising.

## Evaluating Effectiveness

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Operation Place Safety is a harm *reduction* strategy with the goal of making facilities safer. Its enhanced response is only applied to the most serious acts of violence in order to deter offenders from committing them. This begs the question: have the number of prohibited violent acts gone down?

### Method for Counting Prohibited Violent Acts

A prohibited violent act is a specific behavior in need of specific measures to count it accurately. DOC's data infrastructure is limited in its ability track violence to the level of specificity of a prohibited violent act, which required nontraditional data assembly methods to count their occurrence. Incident reports of staff assault or fight/assault from DOC's Incident Management and Reporting System (IMRS) were selected and matched (via computer software) with other cross-system data to add a flag indicating whether the incident was classified as a prohibited violent act. IMRS was chosen as a data source because it held more utility than other administrative data such as disciplinary records. IMRS incidents of staff assault and fight/assault were used as the foundation to add a prohibited violent act flag based on certain logical elements for each type.

- **STAFF ASSAULTS – AGGRAVATED STAFF ASSAULT FLAG.** Not all staff assault incidents meet criteria of a prohibited violent act. For example, a staff assault may include an offender throwing an identification card or throwing closed fist punches. Both are staff assaults but are qualitatively different. A staff assault is considered a prohibited violent act if it causes or attempts to cause serious bodily injury. Staff assault incidents were matched with disciplinary records and flagged as a prohibited violent act if it resulted in the offender being issued a finding of guilty or reduced for an aggravated staff assault infraction. Other staff assault incidents may have resulted in other infractions (such as a non-aggravated staff assault) but, determining the type of infraction resulting from an incident was not the goal of this analysis.
- **FIGHTS/ASSAULTS – WEAPON FLAG.** Fights/assaults with weapons include those in which a weapon is visibly displayed or used during the incident. Weapons may take a variety of forms but were treated as being either present or absent in a fight/assault. Incident reports contain a weapons modifier and this was used to determine if a fight/assault involved a weapon. No matching with disciplinary records was needed.
- **FIGHTS/ASSAULTS - MULTI-OFFENDER FLAG.** Multi-offender fights/assaults include those with three or more offenders. Incident reports list all offenders involved in the incident, of whom, may take on variety of roles. A small number of incident reports listed offenders who were present during the incident but did not participate. For example, two offenders may have been fighting while a third offender acted as a 'lookout'. To mitigate counting these incidents as multi-offender, fights/assaults were matched with disciplinary record to determine if any of the offenders listed on the incident report were issued a finding of guilty or reduced for an infraction of either refusing to disperse or staff interference (independent of an infraction for the fight/assault). These offenders were considered non-participants and filtered out to determine the number

of actual participants. If the number of actual participants was three or more, the fight/assault was considered multi-offender.

- **TREATING PROHIBITED VIOLENT ACTS AS SOMEWHAT MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE FOR THE PURPOSE OF PRECISION.** Prohibited violent acts can be thought of as being mutually exclusive (and are demonstrated in this report as such) but, they may not actually be. For example, a single incident may include a staff assault *and* a fight/assault. If a single incident contained both a staff assault and a fight/assault, each was counted as a unique incident. In addition, a single incident may include multiple prohibited violent act flags. For example, a staff assault may be both aggravated *and* include a weapon. Staff assaults with weapons or multiple offenders were not described in this report as the assumption was these staff assaults would already be flagged as a prohibited violent act through the aggravated staff assault infraction that likely resulted. Likewise, a fight/assault may include a weapon *and* multiple offenders which could be counted as two separate prohibited violent acts. These types of incidents were counted as both because unlike staff assaults, fights/assaults did not logically correspond to a prohibited violent act flag that might be 'replaced' by another. Incidents containing a staff assault and a fight/assault were rare as were incidents with multiple prohibited violent act flags.

Practical experience and analysis inform the number of violent incidents meeting the criteria of a prohibited violent act to be relatively small and the aforementioned actions were taken to wash out noise that would be less apparent with a larger sample. Data was spot checked to ensure this logic resulted in accurately flagging violent incidents as prohibited violent acts.

### Pre- and Post-Operation Place Safety Results

Operation Place Safety was launched in December 2012. Violent incidents occurring at the West Complex between January 1, 2011 and December 31, 2013 were selected to examine pre-and post-Operation Place Safety time periods. This resulted in an overall sample of 368 violent incidents which were then analyzed for having a prohibited violent act flag.

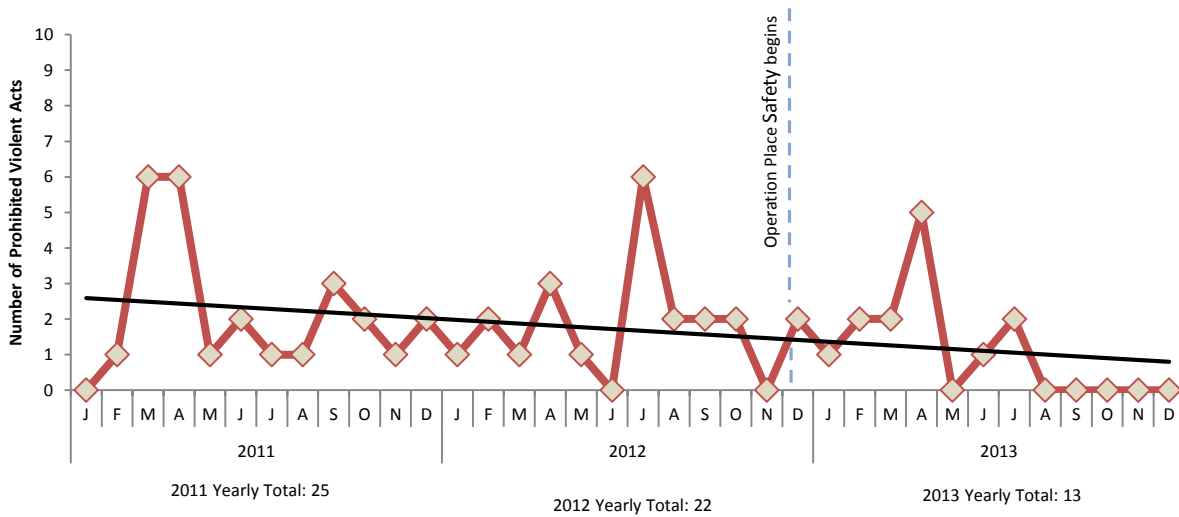
- **VIOLENCE IN GENERAL HAS NOT CHANGED.** The West Complex experienced 124 violent incidents in 2011 and about that same number in 2013. See Table 2 (next page).
- **PROHIBITED VIOLENT ACTS HAVE DROPPED BY NEARLY 50%.** In 2011, 25 violent incidents were prohibited violent acts. In 2013, 13 were prohibited violent acts.
- **AGGRAVATED STAFF ASSAULTS HAVE GONE DOWN.** There was one aggravated staff assault in 2013; a drop from what was six aggravated staff assaults in 2012.
- **FIGHTS/ASSAULTS WITH WEAPONS HAVE DIMINISHED.** There were eight fights/assaults with weapons at the West Complex in 2011 and a similar number in 2012. The number of fights/assaults with weapons shrunk to one in 2013.
- **MULTI-OFFENDER FIGHTS/ASSAULTS HAVE DROPPED SLIGHTLY.** The number of multi-offender fights/assaults dropped from 15 in 2011 to 11 in 2013.

TABLE 2: NUMBER OF VIOLENT INCIDENTS AND PROHIBITED VIOLENT ACTS WITH FLAG TYPE CALENDAR YEAR 2011 TO 2013 – WEST COMPLEX

Calendar Year	Violent Incidents	Prohibited Violent Acts	Aggravated Staff Assaults	Fights Assaults with Weapon	Multi-Offender Fight/Assault
2011	124	25	2	8	15
2012	121	22	6	5	13
2013	123	13	1	1	11
Total	368	60	9	14	39

Prohibited violent acts have gone down. See Graph 3 (below). Violence in the West Complex is less severe, more containable, and consequently, the risk of harm to staff and offenders is reduced.

GRAPH 3: NUMBER OF PROHIBITED VIOLENT ACTS CALENDAR YEAR 2011 TO 2013 – WEST COMPLEX



It is worth noting that April 2013 had the most prohibited violent acts in a single month since Operation Place Safety was implemented. This was a series of multi-offender fights/assaults involving two particular groups and their last multi-offender fight/assault was also the largest that took place in the West Complex in recent history. It involved over 35 offenders. It is also worth noting that August through December 2013 was a period in which there were no prohibited violent acts. This may be the first time the West Complex experienced multiple months without a prohibited violent act.

**Strategy Reflections**

Operation Place Safety began as a pilot to curb the serious acts of group-motivated violence taking place at DOC’s highest security general population facility. It is also the first application of the Ceasefire

model in a correctional facility. There was no blueprint for implementation, lessons were learned along the way, and some changes were made to improve the strategy.

- **RECONCILING GANG DATABASES WITH REAL-TIME INFORMATION.** Figuring out how to target groups was the biggest challenge in developing Operation Place Safety. DOC had gang databases, useful tools governed by set criteria. There were also group dynamics playing out in real-time, which was not necessarily in a database. There were cautions about the limitations of databases as well as the unconstrained discretion not using them might allow. Initially, DOC used a combination of real-time observations from staff and verified them through the gang database. Those offenders who were not in the database were not eligible for privilege restrictions. This proved to be problematic. Violent acts were committed by offenders not in the database and even those who were had close associates who were not. Groups were too fluid, co-mingling, and evading gang formalisms. This created disparities and the practice of using a database to apply privilege restrictions was removed to make the strategy fair and more consistent.
- **REDUCING STRAIN ON INVESTIGATIONS STAFF BY SHIFTING TO A LOCAL OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE.** Early on, the enhanced response relied on the initial footwork of one or two investigations staff to identify perpetrators, assemble a multidisciplinary team of staff, validate close associates, and apply privilege restrictions within the 36-hour lockdown period. The workload associated with the enhanced response was burdened on a few staff and did not incorporate the expertise of staff leaders from other disciplines. A local oversight committee was formed to redistribute the duties associated with the enhanced response across a multidisciplinary group of staff.
- **MOVING BEYOND LAUNCH TO SUSTAIN THE STRATEGY WITH ONGOING COMMUNICATION.** DOC launched Operation Place Safety through a call-in meeting. The importance of sustaining communication throughout the strategy became clear. There was a need to remind offenders of the enhanced response, pro-social opportunities, and community standards. There was also a need to give offenders feedback as to how Operation Place Safety has improved safety and positive opportunity. Call-in meetings are now conducted on an annual basis.
- **COUNTING PROHIBITED VIOLENT ACTS IS DIFFICULT DUE TO DATA LIMITATIONS.** Reducing the most serious acts of violence requires the ability to measure them. DOC's data infrastructure holds a limited intrinsic ability to distinguish prohibited violent acts from other kinds of violence. For example, there is no pre-packaged data point for a prohibited violent act. Rather, there are unique data points located in different systems (disciplinary records, incident reports, etc.). This is why cross-system data matching was conducted. This report offers a count of prohibited violent acts taking place in the only in the West Complex. It is also a count that could be difficult to replicate due to the complex data matching required to attain it. DOC is assessing more efficient methods to track prohibited violent acts in order to better depict both the quality and quantity of violence. Not all violent acts are created equal.
- **OPERATION PLACE SAFETY IS A LOT OF WORK.** Efforts and resources were frontloaded to build a prisons Ceasefire strategy and this work continues to sustain it. Staff at the West Complex have gone above and beyond to build programs and harness opportunities for

special activities with few additional resources. They are also relied upon heavily during each instance of a prohibited violent act. Staff from multiple shifts participate in the enhanced response in addition to their regular duties. The early outcomes listed in this report have been made possible by their extraordinary efforts.

The policy governing Operation Place Safety was revised and another call-in was held to inform offenders in the West Complex of the continuation of Operation Place Safety into calendar year 2014.

### Implications for Practice and Research

It is hoped that the West Complex will continue to experience a reduction in serious acts of violence so lockdowns can be fewer and positive opportunities for offenders can be made more available. The initial indicators in this report are promising but, more is needed to assess the impacts of Operation Place Safety and understand the implications it might hold for DOC and other correctional systems.

- **EXPANSION TO OTHER DOC FACILITIES.** The reduction in prohibited violent acts in the West Complex suggests Operation Place Safety to hold promise in making other facilities safer. DOC intends on launching Operation Place Safety at its other high custody general population facility, Clallam Bay Corrections Center, in response to what appears to be a recent uptick in serious acts of violence taking place there.
- **MORE RESEARCH IS NEEDED ON THE EVOLUTION OF CEASEFIRE FROM COMMUNITIES INTO PRISONS.** Operation Place Safety is the first application of the Ceasefire model in a prison setting and has generated considerable interest throughout the field of corrections. Several correctional organizations have conducted site visits to the West Complex to learn about the model and some are considering implementation. If group violence reduction strategies in prison expand, it is likely there will be cross-jurisdictional variations in how they are applied. This will offer opportunities to compare practices and impacts.
- **IT MUST ALSO BE SAID: OPERATION PLACE SAFETY MAY NOT WORK IN THE LONG-RUN.** The preliminary outcomes examined in this report are positive but, data is limited to a small sample. DOC is one prison system and Operation Place Safety has been in-effect for one year at one pilot site. A more scientific evaluation, inclusive of controls and robust outcome indicators, is needed to determine if the reduction in serious acts of violence is a direct product of Operation Place Safety.

Correctional authorities must continue their efforts to reduce prison violence, especially the most serious violent acts such as those targeted by Operation Place Safety. Prison safety will become more important as prison systems adjust to changes brought on by the Great Recession and other reforms. For example, DOC's offender population has been condensed by sentencing practices that reserve incarceration for more serious crimes. Washington ranks 42<sup>nd</sup> in the nation in rate of incarceration and of the estimated 17,000 offenders in custody, almost half are serving time for murder, assault, or robbery<sup>14</sup>. More recently, some of the tools historically used to manage violent or disruptive offenders are being recognized for their decreasing viability. States across the country (including Washington) are reducing their use of long-term segregation ('supermax') due to a growing body of research indicating its

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<sup>14</sup> For more information on Washington-specific incarceration trends: DOC. (2011, November). The changing face of corrections: offender trends and potential impacts. Retrieved from [http://www.doc.wa.gov/aboutdoc/docs/ChangingFaceofDOC\\_000.pdf](http://www.doc.wa.gov/aboutdoc/docs/ChangingFaceofDOC_000.pdf).



risks may outweigh its benefits<sup>15</sup>. If group violence reduction strategies expand, opportunities to study alternatives to segregation will as well. However, research is needed to determine if Operation Place Safety, as what appears to be a promising practice, becomes an evidence-based practice for the field of corrections to reduce serious acts of prison violence beyond strategies of suppression and containment.

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<sup>15</sup> Research suggests long-term segregation increases offenders' risk of mentally decompensating and committing a new crime when released directly to the community. See Lovell, D. (2008). Patterns of disturbed behavior in a supermax population. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 35. Retrieved from <http://www.son.washington.edu/departments/pch/documents/DisturbedSupermax.pdf>; Lovell, D. and Johnson, C. (2007). Felony and violent recidivism among supermax inmates in Washington State: A pilot study. Retrieved from <http://www.son.washington.edu/faculty/fac-page-files/Lovell-SupermaxRecidivism-4-19-04.pdf>.

## Appendix

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**DOC Policy 470.540 Group Violence Reduction Strategy**

**Letter to Offenders re: Enhanced Response Begins Today in the West Complex**



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

APPLICABILITY  
**PRISON**  
OFFENDER/SPANISH MANUALS

REVISION DATE  
2/1/14

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NUMBER  
**DOC 470.540**

**POLICY**

TITLE  
**GROUP VIOLENCE REDUCTION STRATEGY**

**REVIEW/REVISION HISTORY:**

Effective: 12/1/12  
Revised: 2/1/14

**SUMMARY OF REVISION/REVIEW:**

Numerous changes to expand scope, including policy title. Read carefully.

**APPROVED:**

Signature on file

\_\_\_\_\_  
**BERNARD WARNER**, Secretary  
Department of Corrections

1/14/14  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Signed



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

APPLICABILITY  
**PRISON**  
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NUMBER  
**DOC 470.540**

**POLICY**

TITLE  
**GROUP VIOLENCE REDUCTION STRATEGY**

**REFERENCES:**

DOC 100.100 is hereby incorporated into this policy; [DOC 420.155 Offender Movement](#); [DOC 420.320 Searches of Facilities](#)

**POLICY:**

- I. The Department will establish an evidence-based Group Violence Reduction Strategy to deter offenders from committing violent acts. The strategy will deter violence by imposing privilege restrictions on groups comprised of offenders committing certain violent acts (i.e., perpetrators) and offenders influencing their behavior (i.e., close associates).
- II. Offenders will be provided with messages of non-violence from Department employees and influential community members to reinforce pro-social community values.
- III. Assistance will be made available to help offenders succeed in pro-social alternatives to violence.
- IV. This policy applies only in Prisons implementing the strategy, as identified by the Assistant Secretary for Prisons.

**DIRECTIVE:**

- I. General Requirements
  - A. The following prohibited violent acts will be subject to restrictions:
    - 1. Staff Assault (i.e., causing or attempting to cause bodily injury to a Department employee, contract staff, or volunteer)
    - 2. Fight/Assault with a Weapon (i.e., fight/assault in which a weapon is used or visibly present)
    - 3. Multi-Offender Fight/Assault (i.e., fight/assault involving 3 or more offenders)
  - B. Restrictions will be selected from the Group Violence Reduction Strategy Restrictions Grid (Attachment 2).
  - C. Restrictions will only be applied to:
    - 1. Offenders identified as perpetrators of a prohibited violent act, and



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**POLICY**

TITLE

**GROUP VIOLENCE REDUCTION STRATEGY**

2. Offenders identified through a multidisciplinary process to be close associates of the perpetrator(s).

## II. Group Violence Reduction Committee

- A. Facilities will establish a Group Violence Reduction Committee to provide strategic oversight and assist with the response to prohibited violent acts. Committee participation will be multidisciplinary and include, at a minimum:

1. Subject Matter Expert on the Group Violence Reduction Strategy,
2. Correctional Program Manager/designee,
3. Correctional Captain/designee, and
4. Intelligence and Investigations Lead/designee.

## III. Offender Notification

- A. Offenders will be notified of the Group Violence Reduction Strategy prior to implementation and on a recurring basis to enhance compliance.

1. The Superintendent/designee will ensure offenders are notified in writing.
2. Offenders arriving at the facility will be notified during orientation.

- B. Offenders will be notified of the Group Violence Reduction Strategy and its general requirements through meetings facilitated by the Superintendent/designee.

1. The Superintendent/designee will ensure that meetings are held at least every 12 months.
2. The Superintendent/designee will assemble a panel of Group Violence Reduction Strategy partners to address offenders during the meeting, including:
  - a. A multidisciplinary team comprised of, at a minimum, Department employees from the Group Violence Reduction Committee, custody, classification, offender programs, and visitation.
  - b. Community members selected for their influence and credibility with offenders from at least two of the following categories:
    - 1) **Broad Influence:** Has a high level of influence and credibility, regardless of community ties or relevance



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**GROUP VIOLENCE REDUCTION STRATEGY**

- 2) Intermediate Influence: Has a close tie to offenders' larger external communities
- 3) Specific Influence: Has a close relationship to an offender
- 3. The Superintendent/designee will instruct each Group Violence Reduction Strategy partner to adhere to a particular message during the meeting.
  - a. Department employees will explain the violent acts subject to restrictions, specific restrictions, criteria for identifying offenders as perpetrator and/or close associates, and assistance available to offenders. The message should be respectful and non-threatening.
  - b. Community members will express pro-social community values, reject violence, reinforce positive community standards, and encourage offenders to seek assistance.

IV. Offender Assistance

- A. Assistance will be provided to offenders in the form of programming and job opportunities.

V. Response to Prohibited Violent Acts

- A. In the event of a prohibited violent act, the units where the involved offenders are housed will be immediately placed on lockdown or restricted movement per DOC 420.155 Offender Movement.
- B. The Shift Commander will initiate Group Violence Reduction Strategy Response Checklist (Attachment 1) and ensure the following occur within 36 hours of the incident, unless an extension or exemption is approved by the Assistant Secretary for Prisons:
  - 1. Identification of Perpetrators
    - a. The Intelligence and Investigations Unit (IIU) and at least one member from the Group Violence Reduction Committee will respond to review offenders involved in the incident and identify perpetrators.
      - 1) Perpetrators are offenders directly present in and willfully committing a prohibited violent act.



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- 2) Other Participants are offenders directly present in a prohibited violent act whose actions represent non-willful participation.
2. Identification of Associates
    - a. The IIU and member(s) of the Group Violence Reduction Committee will assemble a team of custody and classification employees from the units where the involved offenders are housed. Multiple shifts will be represented.
    - b. Each team member will complete a separate DOC 21-611 Offender Associate List for each identified perpetrator, listing the perpetrator's associates.
      - 1) Associates are offenders known to interact with a perpetrator.
  3. Determination of Close Associates
    - a. For each perpetrator, the IIU and Group Violence Reduction Committee member(s) will review the completed DOC 21-611 Offender Associate Lists to determine the perpetrator's close associates.
      - 1) Close associates are offenders known to interact with a perpetrator on a regular basis, whose interaction has the potential to influence the perpetrator's behavior.
      - 2) Close associates will be determined based on identification as an associate on multiple team members' DOC 21-611 Offender Associate Lists.
    - b. For each perpetrator, the IIU and Group Violence Reduction Committee member(s) will compile a list of close associates using DOC 21-616 Offender Close Associate Recommendation and submit the list to the Superintendent/designee or Incident Commander for review.
  4. Application of Restrictions
    - a. For each perpetrator, the Superintendent/designee or Incident Commander will:



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- 1) Review the DOC 21-616 Offender Close Associate Recommendation and determine the close associates to include for restrictions.
    - a) Approval from the Assistant Secretary for Prisons will be required to impose restrictions on more than 9 close associates for any one perpetrator.
  - 2) Select restrictions from the Group Violence Reduction Strategy Restrictions Grid (Attachment 2) to impose on the perpetrator and close associates.
    - a) The same restrictions will be imposed on the perpetrator(s) and all close associates. No more than 6 restrictions will be imposed for each incident.
  - 3) Notify the perpetrator and close associates of the restrictions using DOC 21-548 Notification of Restrictions.
- C. Restrictions will begin immediately after the facility returns to new normal operations and remain in effect for 30 days. Restrictions will be applied in addition to any sanctions imposed through the disciplinary process.
- D. At the time the restrictions begin, cell searches will be initiated for perpetrators and close associates per DOC 420.320 Searches of Facilities.
- E. The Shift Commander or Unit Manager(s)/designee(s) will:
1. Maintain and distribute a restrictions list to unit and program employees identifying the perpetrators and close associates, restrictions imposed, and beginning and end dates of the 30 day restriction period.
  2. Document the restrictions in chrono entries in each offender's electronic file.
- F. If the Assistant Secretary for Prisons approves an extension of the 36 hour time period to complete the response, the Group Violence Reduction Committee will notify the Strategic Operations Manager, who will review the incident and application of policy.
- G. If the Assistant Secretary for Prisons approves exemption from the response requirement, the Group Violence Reduction Committee will:
1. Notify the Strategic Operations Manager, who will review the incident and application of policy.





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2. Verbally notify offenders involved in the prohibited violent act of the reasons for the exemption and reinforce non-violent messages.

#### VI. Post-Response Review

- A. Within 2 business days of return to new normal operations, the Group Violence Reduction Committee will meet to debrief the response and provide information to offenders.
  1. Responding employees from the Committee and IIU will meet with the Group Violence Reduction Committee to debrief the incident and response.
  2. The Group Violence Reduction Committee will verbally notify offenders housed in the impacted units of the reasons for restrictions and reinforce non-violent messages. Other Participants will also be notified, when applicable.
- B. The Superintendent/designee will submit the completed Group Violence Reduction Strategy Response Checklist (Attachment 1) and all completed Group Violence Reduction Strategy forms to the Strategic Operations Manager within 10 business days of return to new normal operations.
- C. The Strategic Operations Manager will evaluate each facility's post-response reviews and discuss them with the Group Violence Reduction Committee on a quarterly basis.

#### **DEFINITIONS:**

Words/terms appearing in this policy may be defined in the glossary section of the Policy Manual.

#### **ATTACHMENTS:**

[Group Violence Reduction Strategy Response Checklist \(Attachment 1\)](#)

[Group Violence Reduction Strategy Restrictions Grid \(Attachment 2\)](#)

#### **DOC FORMS:**

[DOC 21-548 Notification of Restrictions](#)

[DOC 21-611 Offender Associate List](#)

[DOC 21-616 Offender Close Associate Recommendation](#)



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
**DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS**

Washington State Penitentiary  
1313 North 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue Walla Walla, Washington 99362 (509) 525-3610

December 9, 2012

TO: All West Complex Offenders

FROM:  Steve Sinclair, Superintendent  
Washington State Penitentiary

SUBJECT: Enhanced Response Begins Today in the West Complex

A meeting was held with offenders on December 9, 2012 to talk about violence in the West Complex. The offenders at this meeting heard some important information presented to them by WSP staff, external law enforcement, and members of the community. These offenders will be sharing the information presented in this meeting with you. In addition, this document provides an overview of this information.

About 66% of the violent incidents at WSP this year have been committed by group-affiliated offenders. This includes the incidents earlier this year involving weapons. While these violent acts were the actions of a few, the offenders committing them did so because of the GROUP they affiliated with. This group dynamic is making this facility unsafe. It is not okay. It must stop.

Starting TODAY, we are applying an Enhanced Response for specific violent acts. We are calling these specific violent acts the "Forbidden 3" and are focusing on them because they pose the greatest risk to facility safety. They include:

- Staff assault – anytime a staff member is physically attacked
- Fight/assault with a weapon – anytime a weapon is displayed or used in a fight/assault
- Multi-man fight/assault – anytime a fight/assault exceeds one-on-one

This Enhanced Response does NOT replace an infraction. All violations, including the Forbidden 3, remain subject to infraction. Rather, the Enhanced Response applies consequences in ADDITION to an infraction. Violations also remain subject to criminal prosecution when applicable.

Consequences of the Enhanced Response will be Privilege Restrictions. Privilege Restrictions will be applied for a 30-day period and after an automatic cell search, include 4-6 of the following:

- Reduction of visits to one visit during 30-day period—excludes attorney visits
- Reduction of phone calls to one phone call during 30-day period—excludes legal calls
- Confiscation of personal shoes
- Confiscation of television
- Confiscation of CD player
- Confiscation of JPay player
- Confiscation of radio
- Revocation of JPay/KIOSK access
- Revocation of weightlifting privileges
- Revocation of hobby craft supplies
- Revocation of offender commissary—excludes hygiene and writing materials
- Revocation of big yard or unit yard
- Revocation of incentive program event access

Privilege Restrictions will be applied to both the perpetrator of a Forbidden 3 AND the group he associates with. We are using the Security Threat Group (STG) database to determine who is group-affiliated and information from staff as to who their associates are. This means that if you are documented in the STG database and you or one of the offenders you associate with on a daily basis commits a Forbidden 3, then you could be subject to these Privilege Restrictions.

This Enhanced Response will NOT apply to offenders not documented in the STG database. However, undocumented offenders still risk being subject to this Enhanced Response. If an undocumented offender commits a Forbidden 3, he will be investigated as is standard practice and, if discovered that he committed a Forbidden 3 on behalf of a group, he will end up in the STG database making himself eligible for Privilege Restrictions in the future.

There are actions you can take to prevent yourself from being impacted by this Enhanced Response:

- Do not commit a Forbidden 3
- Tell the offenders you affiliate with to not commit a Forbidden 3

We never want to apply this Enhanced Response but, we will in order to keep a Forbidden 3 from happening and prevent anyone from getting hurt.

If you have any questions about this Enhanced Response, I encourage you to speak with staff.