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# Miami-Dade's latest plan for street violence: Fixing it door to door.

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Miami-Dade County wants to target pockets of street violence by offering extensive help to groups that often overlap in dangerous ways: young men firing guns, and the young men being shot.

“One day, you’re an offender,” said Deputy Mayor Maurice Kemp, who oversees public-safety agencies for the county, including police and jails. “The next day, you’re a victim.”

This year, the county expects to launch a \$2 million intervention program aimed at what experts say is the surprisingly tiny number of people who can turn a neighborhood into a hot spot for gun violence. A 2015 Justice Department report found that as much as 70 percent of a city’s shootings and homicides could be linked to groups that [constitute less than half a percent of the population](#).

Using a program developed by [John Jay College in New York](#), civilians help intervene with known gang members and drug dealers. They’re presented with threats of arrest, but also offers of help with social services, family, and work.

With a planned budget of nearly \$2 million a year, the program would pay nonprofits, ex-offenders and churches to arrange and host interventions and then follow-up with case work and assistance.

“It’s not just arresting them and putting them in jail,” said Ana Jackson, pastor at Miami’s Sellers Memorial United Methodist church. She’s also a leader of the

local chapter of People Acting for Community Together, a community advocacy group that pressed Miami-Dade to adopt the program. “But it’s finding a way to help them stop this kind of activity.”

A budget given [preliminary approval](#) in February has about \$400,000 a year to pay roughly two dozen “street outreach workers” from the Circle of Brotherhood nonprofit to approach people targeted by the program and persuade them to participate in the intervention sessions. The outreach workers will include ex-inmates who are seen as having high credibility with gang members and drug dealers targeted for the interventions.

The sessions at “peace hubs” — typically a church — will put the person on notice that police are targeting them. At the same time, social workers, charities and other groups will be there to offer relief, said Morris Copeland, head of the county’s Juvenile Services division. That would include help finding jobs, counseling for mental health, and other social services.

The group also plans to expand the assistance to the suspected offender’s family — including reconciliation with children.

“Many of these people have children and they don’t have relationships with them,” Copeland said. “You’re going to have these individuals change their lifestyles. ... There has to be something there that makes them feel connected.”

The John Jay program has already been launched in Boston, Chicago, Detroit and more than a dozen other cities. The program claims drops in gang-related shooting after the rollouts. In Miami-Dade, the program would start in two of the highest-crime areas in the county: the Northside area around Miami, and in parts of South Dade.

“People in these communities know who the criminals are,” said Commission Chairwoman Audrey Edmonson, whose district includes parts of Northside and

who is sponsoring the legislation to fund the program. “We can go to them and say: ‘Hey, enough is enough. Time to get your act together.’”

A no-bid [contract to administer the program](#) passed a commission committee this week. The contract pays a corporation established by the county’s longtime anti-gang consultant, Wayne Rawlins, about \$1.7 million a year to oversee the John Jay program and other unrelated efforts, such as reading programs for daycare centers and outreach efforts to low-income neighborhoods needing county services.

The bulk of the money for Rawlins’ Ummah Futures is set to be paid out to nonprofits involved in the John Jay program, including the Circle of Brotherhood.

A final vote is needed for the Ummah contract, and the administration of Mayor Carlos Gimenez expects to send a separate John Jay agreement to the commission in the coming weeks.

In comments before the commission’s Policy Council, Rawlins said the John Jay program will be measured in the same way as other past anti-gang programs.

“The goal has never changed,” he said. “The goal is to reduce shootings and homicides.”